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CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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INSIDE



Iraq Visit

The occupation of Iraq is entering a critical stage, with just six months to restore order ahead of the return to self-rule, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said. His top envoy warned insurgents are growing more sophisticated and planning bigger attacks.

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Award Winners

The world's first commercially mass-produced hybrid car and America's top-selling pickup were named North America's top vehicles Sunday at the North American International Auto Show.

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Unwed Britney

Pop star Britney Spears married a childhood friend from Louisiana in an early morning ceremony, but quickly arranged to have it annulled, people close to the entertainer said Sunday.

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Asylum bill passes Legislature

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

After nearly 10 months of bouncing between the two chambers of the Legislature, the bill that would enforce international treaties and conventions on asylum seekers locally sailed a final time through the Senate yesterday afternoon.

All eight senators present in yesterday's session okayed Senate Bill 13-135, despite some earlier reservations

expressed by Senate minority leader Pete P. Reyes and Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero.

The measure—a necessary component in the Memorandum of Agreement signed between the CNMI government and the Department of the Interior in September last year—tasks the Attorney General's Office to promulgate rules governing the treatment of asylum seekers in the Commonwealth, based on international treaties and conventions.

Sen. Thomas P. Villagomez, who was chairman of the Senate Committee

on Judiciary, Government, and Law, explained that SB 13-135 enables the AGO to implement the U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the U.N. Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The United States is signatory to these treaties; Section 102 of Covenant requires the CNMI to conform to such forms of treaties. However, provisions in the United States Code that implement these treaties in the U.S. do not apply within

the CNMI due to its exclusive jurisdiction over immigration matters, hence the need for the bill.

Villagomez said the bill is also intended to reiterate that the Commonwealth retains exclusive jurisdiction over matters related to immigration and that the public policy of the Commonwealth is that no alien may obtain entry into the Commonwealth as a matter of right and that entry to the CNMI is a privilege extended to aliens based on terms and conditions

See ASYLUM on Page 8

Govt, manpower agency to sign accord on Jan. 8

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Paras Enterprises and the government agreed yesterday to finalize their payment term and consensual transfer agreement for nursing personnel this week.

Acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente, who met with Paras, Department of Finance, and Department of Public Health officials yesterday, said a proposed payment plan that also provides for the official transfer of agency nurses to the Commonwealth Health Center would be made on or before January 8.

Benavente acknowledged that DPH still owes the manpower firms money but he said that the department has yet to verify and certify all the billings prepared by the agencies.

"We still owe them, but we're not capable right now of paying them everything so we'd come up with a payment plan. They (Paras) are asking for commitment from us," said Benavente.

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LIBERTY DONES

Paras Enterprises president Juan T. Guerrero, right, lawyer Mark Williams, left, look on as DPH Secretary James U. Hofschneider, background left, and John D. Guerrero, hold a brief talk shortly after their meeting with acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente at the Governors' Office Monday morning. The parties aim to sign a payment plan and transfer agreement for CHC nurses on Jan. 8.

More JALWays flights from Kansai

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Citing high passenger demand, Japan Airlines officials yesterday disclosed that JAL and JALWays would provide six additional flights from Kansai to Saipan beginning January 8, 2004.

JAL Group Saipan District Office sales manager Yasuyoshi Kinoshita said the additional flights from Kansai would be serviced by Boeing 747, in order to accommodate more passengers. JALWays usually uses 767 in its Saipan flights.

Kinoshita said the additional Kansai flights would arrive on Saipan on January 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and January 18, 2004. Boeing 747 has a seating capacity of 429, 180



passengers more than the B-767 aircraft.

"This means the aircraft change is equal to one extra flight each day," Kinoshita explained. The flight will depart Saipan 6am and arrive on Kansai at 8:35am. The aircraft will leave Kansai at 10pm and arrives on Saipan at 2:20am during the said schedules.

Kinoshita added that in Japan, the second Monday in January is called "Coming of Age Day" or Seijin-no-hi, which is a national holiday celebrated by all Japanese for adults who just turned 20 years old.

He added that because of the holiday,

JAL group expects additional visitors from Japan to visit the Northern Marianas. The company is pinning its hopes, on young people, golfers, windsurfers, divers, and families who would take a vacation during this season.

In 2003, passenger traffic from Japan to the Northern Marianas jumped almost 37 percent in January 2003 compared with January 2002's tally, with more than 20,000 additional passengers from Japan arriving on Saipan in the first month of the year.

Statistics disclosed that JAL and JALWays brought in a total of 12,551 passengers from Tokyo, an estimated

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Criminal cases flood court after New Year

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Attorney General's Office yesterday filed at least 12 criminal cases in Superior Court, flooding the court docket mostly with theft and disturbing the peace cases only a few days after the New Year.

CNMI chief prosecutor filed the charges against 12 persons. The court issued summons compelling each of the twelve defendants to appear before it on Feb. 9.

Hutton charged the following
See CRIMINAL on Page 8



Local

NMI prodded to invest \$500K in Palau Micronesia Air

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Proponents of the newly established Palau Micronesia Air lobbied the House of Representatives yesterday to adopt a resolution authorizing the application of a \$500,000 loan that would be infused into the firm.

The lower chamber is expected to tackle the proposed resolution in this morning’s session.

The proposed resolution would authorize the Commonwealth Development Authority to take out the half-million-dollar loan from the Pacific Islands De-

velopment Bank, to be repaid by the CNMI government.

The company’s president, Alan R. Seid, said the amount would be considered as the CNMI government’s equity investment in the new airline, entitling it to 10 percent of the company’s shares of common stocks and two seats on the firm’s Board of Directors. The responsibility, however, of paying for the loan would rest on the CNMI government’s shoulders.

“The purpose of the equity is to start the company and build the profit and provide a strong reserve for the future. It [\$500,000] is a direct equity and not a loan

to the airline, though it [stocks] would be hopefully valued at a greater amount and will be generating dividends...It’s a risk that you must recognize but we think that the value of the stocks would increase, the business would be successful, that it would be able to generate good economic stimulus in the CNMI and the neighboring islands,” Seid said.

Acting governor Diego T. Benavente, who was present in yesterday’s presentation at the lower chamber, described the loan as “the most proper for the purpose that we made our contribution to the PIDB.” The CNMI government had infused \$1 mil-

lion to PIDB, which was set up as a means to support regional development projects.

“As far as the repayment is concerned. I was hoping that that would be included in your discussions, and since this is really not a very substantial amount that we’d be borrowing...there are arrangements that could be made through CDA,” he added.

At the same time, Benavente viewed the airline firm as an effective means to tie the Micronesian region together, as well as a booster to the government’s thrust of increasing available flights to the Commonwealth.

Seid assured the lawmakers of direct flights between Saipan and Palau, as well as connections between Saipan and the airline’s other destinations, such as the Federated States of Micronesia; Manila, the Philippines; Darwin, Australia; and others.

“Initially, we will fly direct from Koror to the CNMI once a week and the first flight to Saipan would be on April 22,” he said.

Palau Micronesia Air will start formal operations in April 20, 2004, with the initial flight going to Yap-Guam-Chuuk-Pohnpei, where it will stay overnight. It will then proceed to Manila. On the third day, it will fly to Koror-Saipan-Manila. Seid said that initial estimates for a ticket to Manila is about \$500.

In six months, flights to Saipan could be increased to twice-a-week, and would include the flight from Darwin, Australia, which would fly from Darwin to Palau to Saipan, he added.

The Palau-based airline company has recently secured a lease of a 124-seater Boeing 737-300 aircraft, which is due to be delivered on April 15, 2004. The aircraft was leased from Volito Aviation AB, a Swedish leasing company, and is presently in service with Air Calin operating in New Caledonia.

“We have an operation-

al contract with the world renowned airline, Air New Zealand, which will provide the flight crews and aircraft main-tenance support necessary for Palau Micronesia Air to become a reality in the Micronesian skies,” said Seid.

Once the CNMI government commits to investing in the airline, Seid said they would open up the shares to the public who would want to invest in the company.

“We have reserved some \$200,000 worth of shares to be sold to the local community here. We did the same with the other communities...for a total of about \$600,000 worth of shares would be sold to the public at large at \$100 per share. The idea behind that is we want the airline to be truly owned by the local people so that in the long run they will support it,” he added.

In an earlier statement, Seid said the people behind the creation of the airline company “are committed to making Palau Micronesia Air an economic growth engine that serves both the return for our investors while being a way of bringing the people of the region closer together as a community and also introducing our wonderfully unique cultures and the natural beauty of our region to the rest of the world.”

China officials check on SU issue

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The Saipan University issue has caught the eye of the Beijing government, with officials from the People’s Republic of China coming to the Commonwealth to find out what is going on.

Three officials from China’s Ministry of Education were on-island last week to personally check on the Saipan University issue, particularly the status of the Chinese students who have allegedly been defrauded by the school’s South Korean founder.

Acting governor Diego T. Benavente confirmed this to reporters yesterday, saying he had received a letter from the ministry informing him of their visit. He did not specify the names of the three.

Although he was supposed to meet with these official, the meeting fell through. Benavente said the officials did not show up during the scheduled meeting.

The acting governor said he had wanted to assure these officials that the government is doing everything it can to make sure that the students affected by the situation at the Saipan University are protected and that the matter is deemed very important to the local government.

“Of course, we had prepared a team because we think this is a critical issue. Not only do

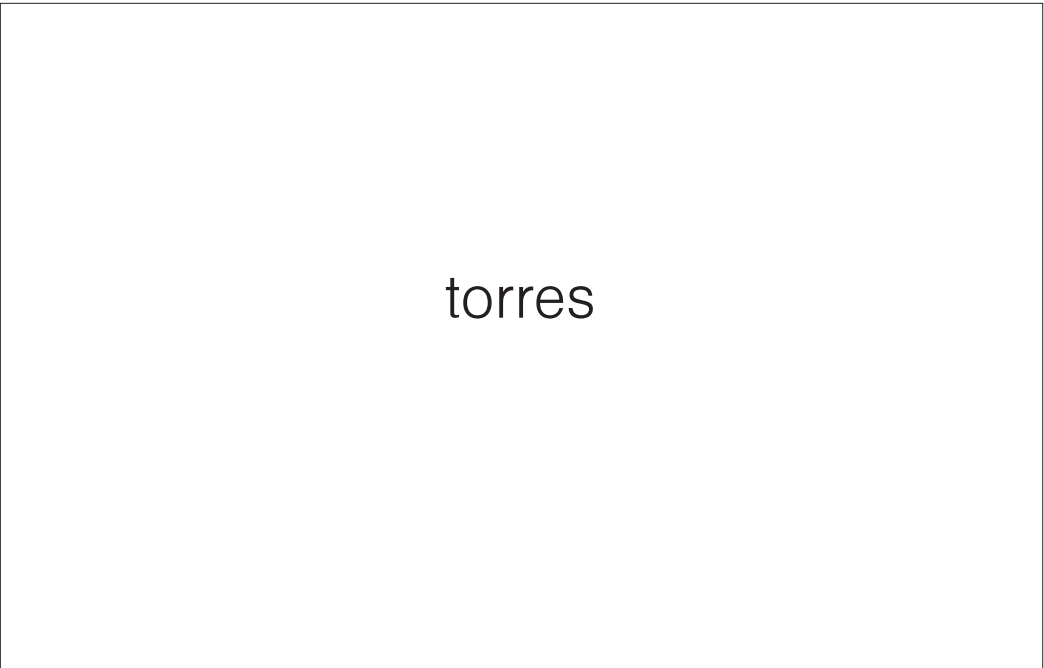
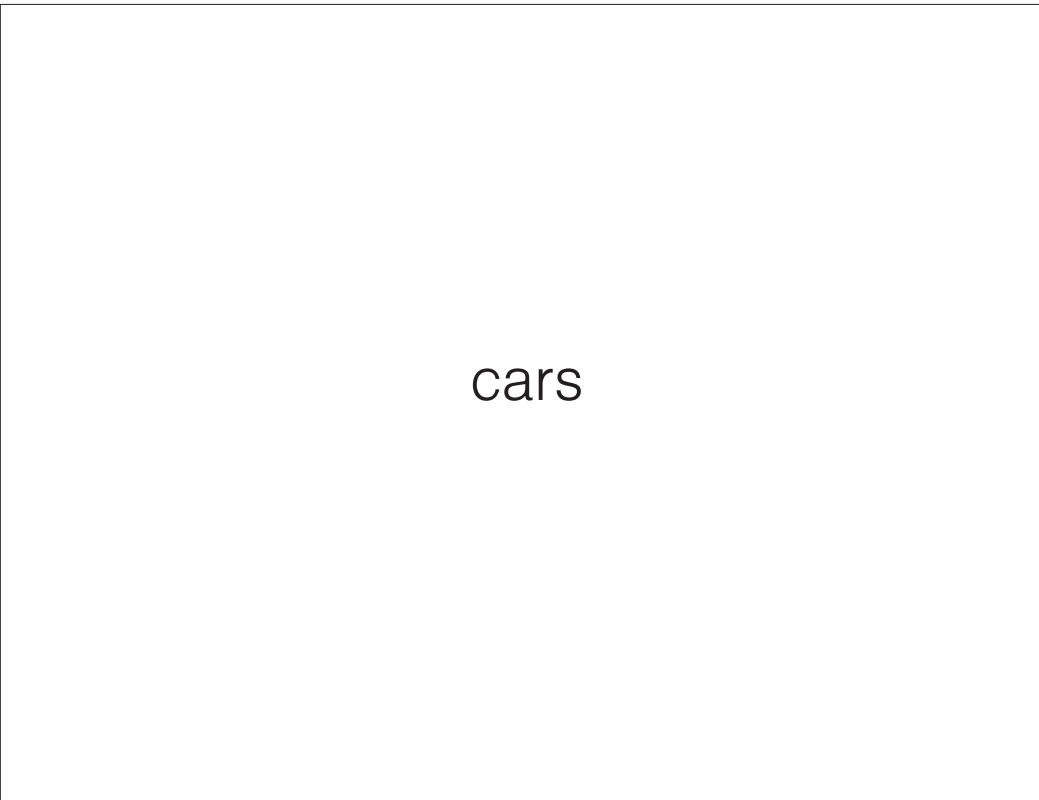
we want to show our ability to enforce our laws and make sure that all those individuals [students] are protected but we also wanted to relay the strong message that the CNMI has initiated the Pacific Gateway project, in which the students from China and other parts of Asia are going to be very critical to that project,” he said.

The students, numbering 86 in all, have reportedly been granted temporary work authorizations by the Attorney General’s Office, giving them 30 days to find a job on the island.

When asked if the CNMI government intends to extend the TWA if the students fail to land a job during the 30-day period, Benavente said: “I cannot make that comment right now but certainly our law enforcement agencies, our Department of Labor, and our Attorney General’s Office are on top of this and we’re looking at every avenue to provide due process to these individuals.”

Benavente declined to put blame on the State Board of Regents for granting a provisional license to the university, saying that, although they have already talked with the BoR, the body is actually very limited in the restrictions it can place on the provisional licenses it issues. “The license contains really broad language for any company that wants to set up an institution here.”

tribune



Babauta concerned over Fed’s decision to cut BTS funding

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta has expressed concerns about the CNMI being placed at greater risks for the dreaded brown tree snake infestation following the federal government’s move to reduce its funding for BTS containment program on Guam in FY 2004.

He said this has resulted in the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services-Guam readjusting its programs.

“It has come to my attention that FY 2004 funding for BTS programs will limit the amount of control efforts on Guam...the result of the readjustment will put the CNMI, as well as Hawaii, at even greater risk for an accidental BTS introduction,” Babauta said in a December 18, 2003 letter to U.S. Navy Secretary Gordon R. England.

The same letter was also sent to U.S. Air Force Secretary Dr. J.G. Roche, the USDA Secretary, and the U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary.

Babauta said the budget constraints would leave the Guam office operating at 85 percent efficacy level compared with 2003. “It’s not truly an effective quarantine program,” he said.

The governor said the issue is “of great concern to me and the CNMI as it would put our economy and environment at great risk,”

noting that containing the BTS on Guam until eradication efforts are in place “would seem to be the best possible scenario.”

Babauta said he looks forward to discussing the issue with Navy officials during the annual BTS meeting on February 25-27, 2004, and the national invasive species advisory council meeting on March 2-4, 2004 in Hawaii.

Early this year, the CNMI received \$325,000 grant—a big increase from the initial \$30,000 budget—from the Department of the Interior for BTS Control and Research Program.

Local authorities, led by Department of Fish and Wildlife herpetologist Nathan Hawley said there have been at least 11 BTS caught on Saipan since 1986.

In September 2003, reports said that a BTS was sighted on Tinian.

Authorities said that BTS (*Boiga irregularis*) is an introduced species on Guam after World War II and it has since been responsible for the extinction of numerous bird and lizard species and frequent power outages.

The snakes could reach the CNMI and other places as a stowaway in cargo or aircraft.

The CNMI Emergency BTS Response Team advises the public to kill the snake and call the Snake Hotline (28-SNAKE) immediately if they see one.



Three stranded fishermen rescued

Elements of the Boating Safety Section rescued three fishermen stranded on Managaha Island in the wee hours of Sunday, police reported yesterday.

Department of Public Safety spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. said around 1:48am Sunday, the DPS dispatched BSS personnel to a reported sunken vessel near the Managaha Island.

Rescued from the island were Diego Takai, 25; Jesus Tudela, 64; and William Mariur, 47. The three swam to Managaha Island from their sunken vessel and stayed with a security officer, who made the call to the DPS Central Station.

Police reported that BSS launched the rescue mission from the Smiling Cove Marina around 2:16am with two police officers—James Omar and David Rabauliman. Around 2:35am, the BSS personnel arrived on Managaha and met with the victims. All boat occupants were reportedly in good condition.

Preliminary investigation disclosed that the three fishermen left the Smiling Cove Marina around 9:30pm Saturday and headed to Managaha Island for spear fishing.

Around midnight, the victims noticed that their vessel was no longer at the site where they had anchored off. The three searched for the vessel but could not locate it. From there the three swam to Managaha Island to call for assistance. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

Two women arrested for assault

Authorities arrested two women in Tanapag Saturday night following complaints of an assault and battery incident inside the shower room at the arrestees’ dormitory.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr. said around 8:49pm Saturday, two employees of Sam Marianas Factory in Tanapag were placed under arrest as a result of a scuffle.

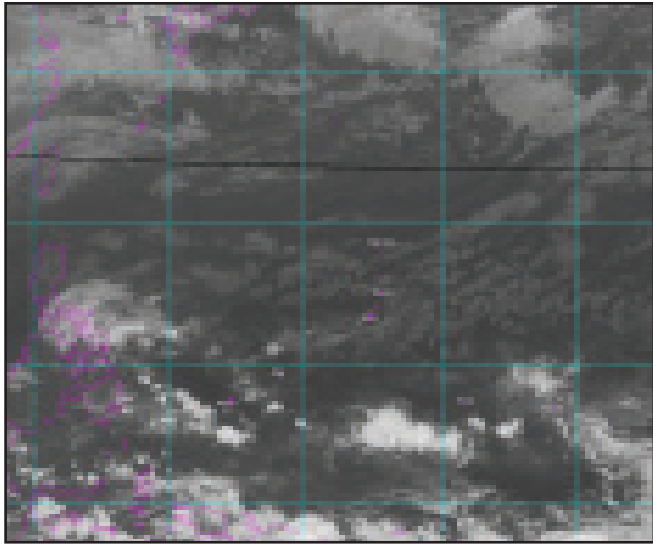
Preliminary investigation revealed that authorities Liu Mei, 25, and Yan Huilan, 31, were charged with assault and battery after the incident. According to the report, the two ganged up on another female employee inside their shower room.

The report added that prior to the incident, Huilan had an argument with the victim in the shower room where the fight broke out. During the commotion, Mei joined the fray and allegedly assaulted the victim as well.

The victim’s identity was withheld pending the completion of the investigation, Blas added.

Both suspects were arrested at the scene and were brought to the Adult Correctional Facility in Susupe where they are now detained. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

WEATHER FORECAST



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M. DECEMBER 29, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Remnants of an old shear line extends from an area just north of Palau eastward near Yap...Chuuk and Pohnpei and across the Marshall Islands. Light to moderate showers are occurring along the shear line within 75 miles of a line from 9n133e to 8n140e to 8n180. Light rain and showers extend up to 100 miles northwest of a second shear line that stretches from 17n135e to 25n160e. This area includes portions of the extreme Northern Mariana Islands north of pagan. A near-equatorial trough along 2n is generating scattered showers and an occasional thunderstorm south of Kosrae state and the Marshall Islands between the equator and 3n from 160e to 180.

SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Partly cloudy and windy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 20-25 mph. Highs near 86.

GUAM AND ROTA
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 mph. Highs near 86.

PALAU
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

YAP AND ULITHI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.

CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.

	CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
	Auckland	Sunny	76F (24C)	62F (17C)
	Beijing	Partly Cloudy	72F (22C)	65F (18C)
	Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	78F (26C)	64F (18C)
	Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78F (26C)	64F (18C)
	London, England	Rain	49F (9C)	43F (6C)
	Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	51F (11C)
	Manila	Partly Cloudy	81F (27C)	69F (21C)
	Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	74F (23C)	51F (11C)
	Miami	Partly Cloudy	81F (27C)	69F (21C)
	New York City	Partly Cloudy	48F (9C)	30F (-1C)
	Osaka	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	25F (-4C)
	Paris	Rain	40F (4C)	35F (2C)
	Pusan	Partly Cloudy	49F (9C)	35F (2C)
	Rome	Sunny	44F (7C)	34F (1C)
	Salem, Oregon	Partly Cloudy	33F (1C)	32F (0C)
	San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	52F (11C)	42F (6C)
	Seoul	Sunny	45F (6C)	25F (-4C)
	Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	31F (-1C)
	Washington, DC	Rain	62F (17C)	32F (0C)

Rota police officers get promotion

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Police Commissioner Edward Camacho handed out promotions to two Rota police officers in recognition of their selfless service to the Northern Marianas' peace and order situation.

In a ceremony held last week, Camacho announced the promotion of Police Officer II Eusebio Manglona to police officer III and Police Officer I Raimundo Manglona, police officer II. Camacho cited as factors behind the promotion Manglona's character and his potentials in the persistent pursuit of public safety on Rota and its people.

Camacho also acknowledged the services rendered by other promoted police officers, including Victor Val Hocog, Joe Chaurfauros, Jonathan Garces, Trishia Seman, and Gerald Ogo, who were all promoted in 2003.

After the promotion ceremony during Camacho's surprise visit to the Department of Public Safety-Rota, the commissioner joined resident director Steve Mesgnon, police officers, firefighters, and their families in celebration of the holiday season at the Swimming Hole Beach near the Rota Resort.

"The promotion ceremony makes me very proud to be your commissioner, and I am sure that your resident director and deputy director Frank Taisacan, as well as other leaders on Rota, are just as proud of your achievements," Camacho said.

He acknowledged the officers' dedication, professionalism, character, and potentials, which are the driving forces that make up a police force that "is focused at ensuring that the public's safety is always protected."

"You have definitely earned your promotion. Congratulations and thank you for your services to the people of Rota and the rest of the CNMI. You are truly part of the world's finest and the CNMI's favorite," Camacho added.

The commissioner also expressed his gratitude to the family members of the police officers for their sacrifice, moral support, and trust in their loved ones' profession.

The DPS commissioner has been handing promotion papers to police officers since last year in efforts to fill in vacant positions and reassigning effective police officers to different divisions.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Police commissioner Edward Camacho, left, handed promotion papers to two Rota Police officers during a ceremony held last week. In photo from left are Camacho, Jonathan Garces, Gerald Ogo, Raimundo Manglona, assistance chief Tom Manglona Sr., Joe Chaurfauros, Jr. resident director Steve Mesgnon, Trishia Seman, Police Capt. Ricardo Taimanao, and Eusebio Manglona.

Govt assesses barge's impact on Saipan reef

Environmental assessment on the possible damage a barge had caused on the reef off Saipan's coast began yesterday, while the vessel was moored at the South Baker Dock for repair.

But Tony Cabrera, the Port of Saipan's manager and harbor-master, said he was not aware yet of any result of the environmental impact assessment.

Cabrera had said that the Coastal Resources Management Office and the Division of Fish and Wildlife would assess the environmental impact when the Martha E barge got stuck on the reef for several days, only to be pulled out Friday night.

According to Cabrera, the towing rope connecting the barge from tugboat June T snapped, causing the former to be pushed by strong currents to the reef. He had said that the barge got stuck beginning Monday night, although there were reports saying that the incident actually happened since Sunday last week.

Cabrera said the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the U.S. Coast Guard have yet to complete their investigation re-

garding the incident. He said he was still waiting for the tugboat captain's report as of yesterday afternoon.

The International Bridge Corp. of Guam, according to Cabrera, owns the barge and the tugboat. The port manager had said that the company would be responsible for the expenses incurred in the salvage operations. According to him, the IBC's barge and tugboat would be held on Saipan until the company is cleared of any liability.

The incident prompted the response of various government agencies, including the CPA, CRMO, DFW, the Emergency Management Office, and the Coast Guard.

CRMO enforcement chief Martin Cabrera could not be reached as of press time regarding the initial findings on the extent of the environmental impact to the reef, and whether the agency would impose a fine on the barge's owner. CPA's Cabrera said the barge is loaded with construction equipment and is headed to the Wake Island.

(John Ravelo)

LEGISLATURE BUREAU

Opinion

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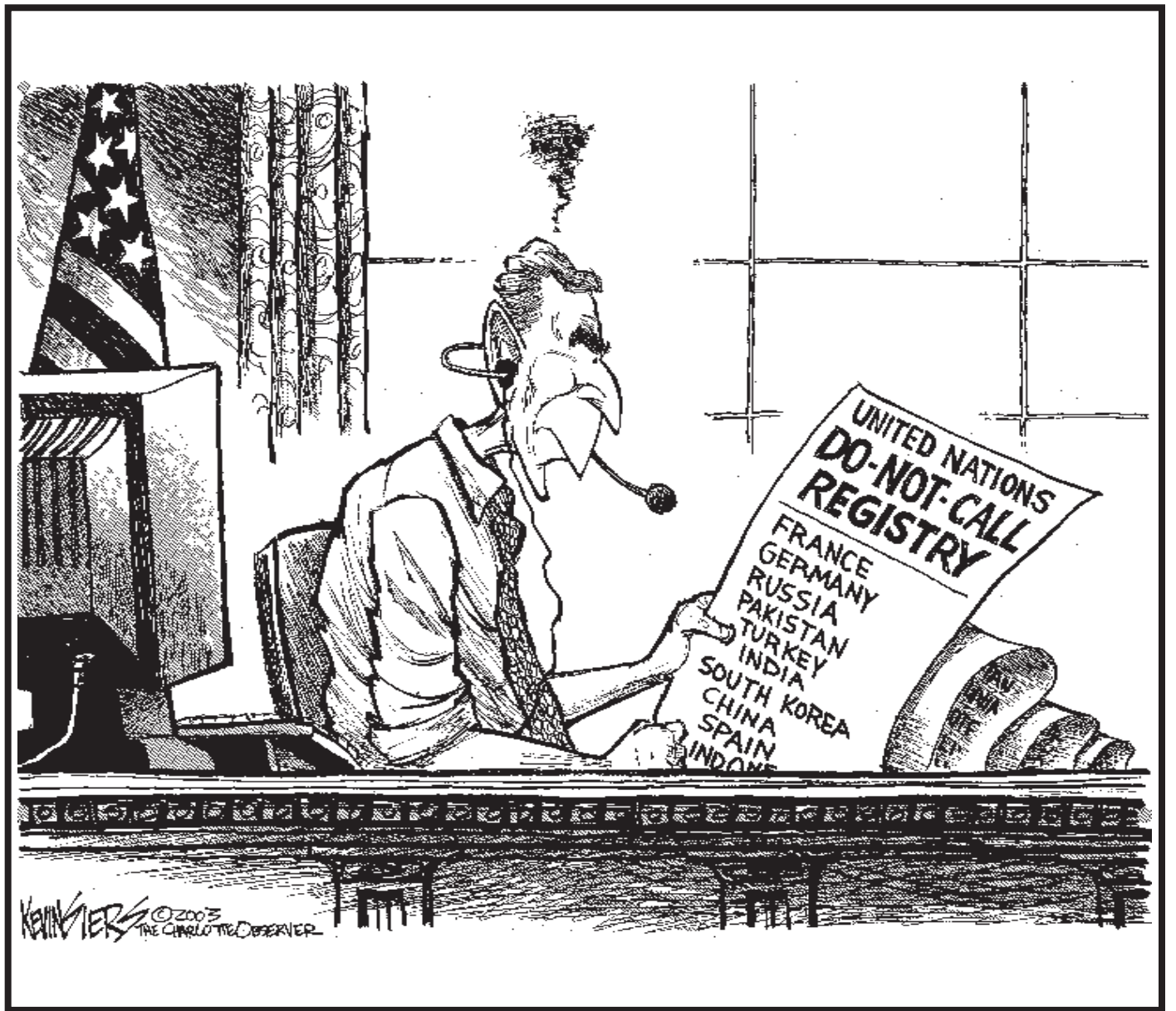
Taking AIDS seriously

The World Health Organization this week announced an ambitious plan to treat 3 million AIDS victims in the developing world with antiretroviral drugs by the end of 2005. That's only half of the people who desperately need care, but it's 10 times as many patients as are currently receiving these life-sustaining therapies. In sub-Saharan Africa, in fact, only 50,000 people are getting care. As a result 8,000 people die every day—people who could be saved—and societies are collapsing. The WHO plans to put the emergency response skills it developed in connection with the SARS outbreak to work in countries hard hit by HIV. It aims to deliver, in large volumes, a standardized package of antiretroviral therapies and to train local health-care workers in the delivery of these therapies and related services. The new urgency at WHO is welcome, and its plan seems well conceived and deserving of support.

Treating people with AIDS in Africa is a problem of such magnitude that it can induce a certain paralysis in policymakers, many of whom have fallen back on prevention as the only viable way to stop the pandemic. Yet at a certain point—a point long since past—it becomes immoral to focus narrowly on preventing further infection, as governments are now recognizing. It also doesn't work; people are more likely to come in for testing—and so further the goal of prevention—if they know treatment is available for those in need. Nor are the cost of drugs or the sorry state of Africa's health infrastructure excuses for inaction. Drug prices will continue to drop the more people are treated, and infrastructure will just have to be built.

In this country, President Bush's much-trumpeted global AIDS initiative is mired in a spat over funding levels. Bush has sought a little more than \$2 billion for the first year of his five-year, \$15 billion program, a level that has Democrats and AIDS advocates crying foul. The administration argues that Africa's health infrastructure cannot absorb larger sums of money in the early years of the program, so it means to ramp up spending over time.

The real problem, though, seems to lie not in Africa but in the administration's inability to distribute the money. In fact, at this stage, there is reason for concern about whether even the lower funding levels will actually get spent in the first year. *Washington Post*



Annan lays out AIDS crisis in stark terms

By JOSEPH DOLMAN

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan behaved in shocking fashion this week. He threw aside 20 years worth of diplomatic argle-bargle and blurted out God's ugly truth about the war against AIDS.

By the United Nations' own standards, he declared, the fight to defeat the virus was failing.

His new tactic of vigorous candor might ultimately come to be regarded as a watershed moment in the long — and so far losing — struggle to beat back one of the worst pandemics in human history.

Gone were the usual hollow pleas to keep hope alive. Gone was the Greek chorus of public-health functionaries, telling us that hard-hit countries were finally beginning to mobilize. Gone were the benign public expressions of faith that rich donor nations would someday wake up and save Africa.

The main theme has abruptly changed.

"We are not on track to begin reducing the scale and impact of the epidemic by 2005," Annan told the General Assembly, in a reference to the United Nations' own timetable. "By that date, we should have cut the number of young people infected by HIV in the worst affected nations. We should have halved the rate at which infants contract HIV. We should have comprehensive care programs in place." But none of this has happened.

What kind of job has the world done to roll back the advance of AIDS?

Peter Piot of UNAIDS told a press conference after Annan's address on Monday that the world's nations in aggregate have earned barely passing marks. No country gets an A, he said.

Richard Feachem of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS was less sanguine. "We spent the first two decades of this pandemic sitting on our hands and doing very little to contain it," he said. But might this really be a watershed?

Yes, it might. That's because Annan and the constellation around him didn't just acknowledge failure on Monday and stalk off the dais. Instead, he coupled his remarks with a refreshingly gutsy plan to provide HIV-slowing drugs to 3 million people, most of them in Africa, within two years.

If 3 million doesn't sound like a big deal on a continent where 30 million human beings live with HIV today, bear in mind that just 4.1 million of Africa's HIV-infected population at the moment need

antiretroviral drug therapy. And bear in mind that just 50,000 people — 1 percent of those who require urgent care now — are getting it.

This could be a very big deal.

But its success depends on the outcome of two gigantic tasks. The first one involves a new role for the World Health Organization. This agency always before has tended to move at a civilized diplomatic pace — also known as slow-motion.

While emergency-room doctors measure their progress in hours, the WHO has tended to gauge the progress of its missions in eons. And, true to its diplomatic underpinnings, it seems to have worked diligently over the years not to pick nasty fights with even the loopy heads of state.

But now, under its new chief, Jong-wook Lee, the WHO is planning to take a more active role in the AIDS fight. Someday soon, it will deliver more than advice. It will deliver antiretroviral drugs. Or at the least it will go into countries and build the infrastructures that will enable local doctors themselves to distribute life-prolonging medicine.

"For the first time," Piot said, "the stars are getting into the right configuration." The cost of antiretroviral drugs has dropped from thousands of dollars a year to about \$300. Doctors have simplified anti-HIV drug regimens from a hopeless mess involving numerous medications and time-sensitive schedules to just one pill a day in some cases. Which means it is now possible for a well-coordinated and generously funded effort to provide HIV treatment fast where it's needed.

Which brings us to the second risk.

Even if the WHO can shake off its bureaucratic lethargy and work more like MASH and less like a state board of medical examiners, what does it plan to do for money? On Monday, the implication was clear. Unless the United States, Europe and an assortment of other nations and private donors come through in a major way, the effort will fail. At the moment, the outcome is anybody's guess.

It's a funny thing. For years, the public-health establishment has urged a policy of honesty and pragmatism. But it never quite leveled with us about its own stark limitations. Now it has. And now we know that, unless we make some changes quick, the daily death toll of about 8,000 lost to AIDS will continue.

Dolman is a columnist and member of Newsday's editorial board.

UN revival requires US commitment

By Stephen Schlesinger
LOS ANGELES TIMES

“**F**or time in the modern age,” English historian John Keegan has written, “men have sat down to reorder the world—at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 after the Thirty Years War, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the Napoleonic Wars, in Paris in 1919 after World War I and in San Francisco in 1945 after World War II.” Such is the march of human history that all of these events—except for the most recent one—collapsed in disagreements that eventually led to renewed war.

The ultimate outcome of the San Francisco Conference is still not known. However, what happened there that produced the last of these grand compacts, the United Nations, has already had an enormous impact over the last six decades. Indeed, the founding of the United Nations in the age of nuclear weaponry—far more sinister circumstances than any faced by those earlier meetings—is affecting the survival or demise of humanity.

The United Nations and its labors have become the background noise of our global age. It is truly ubiquitous. It has overseen 40 years of decolonization around the planet; sent peacekeepers to places such as Cambodia, Cyprus and Sinai; helped end apartheid in South Africa via sanctions. The United Nations’ World Health Organization was critical in eradicating smallpox and is on the verge of stamping out polio; its World Food Program feeds hungry people in Africa; its U.N. Development Program sends more multilateral aid dollars abroad than any nation.

People forget that before the United Nation’s founding, there was no truly functioning international organization (except for the creaky, faltering League of Nations). This meant that for many decades there was no place for nations to go in global crises.

Today, after half a century of the United Nations, few of us are unaware that this aging experiment in global society exists and has given some modicum of hope to the world—despite a dearth of financial resources and the brickbats tossed at it by American politicians. It has become the world’s geopolitical emergency room. The question is whether it can survive.

Right-wing demagogues in our land have so unremittingly denigrated the organization for so long—calling it bloated, anti-American, a body that wastes time on speechmaking, abdicates its responsibilities and remains out of touch—that leading members of the Senate now routinely dismiss its importance and argue that it unnecessarily limits our sovereignty.

Furthermore, unilateralism is back in fashion. The Bush administration, after the attacks of Sept. 11, has promulgated a doctrine of preventive war that allows the United States to go into battle whenever it decides against whomever it wishes, regardless of whether there is a legitimate provocation. Recently one of Bush’s hard-line appointees, Richard Perle, publicly derided the United Nations as being as ineffectual as the League of Nations. And last spring, the United States brazenly bypassed the U.N. Security Council to invade Iraq, relying on its pre-emptive doctrine. Tuesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said this crisis was a “fork in the road” for the organization, as decisive as the United Nations’ founding.

The sad fact is that our country would probably not pass the same U.N. Charter today that the U.S. Senate ratified by an overwhelming vote, 89-2, in 1945. Even putting aside its lone-cowboy maneuvers, if Washington had wanted to reinvent the United Nations it would have been virtually impossible to persuade the 191 nations of the world again to draft a charter for the security of the Earth because of the sheer number of countries and the profusion of political differences. (Originally, the organization had 50 members.)

As we look back on the United Nations’ creation, we should realize how fortunate we were to get it in the first place. It took a grand vision, formidable planning and brilliant political leadership from two American presidents—Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman—to turn the organization into reality. Having endured the most calamitous war in history, this World War II generation extracted from the human propensity for devastation the right lesson for our time.

If we are to revive the role of the United Nations today as a peace-maker and security guarantor, the United States, as the only superpower on the planet, must again commit itself to the organization. President Bush himself has slowly come to this realization in the Iraq crisis. He is now seeking to reinvolve our fate with the United Nations because it offers political legitimacy for the American occupation of Iraq. And beyond Iraq, the United Nations bestows cover for various other U.S. global missions, allowing Washington to save taxpayers’ dollars and the lives of its soldiers.

Instead of taking on international ventures alone, we are able to share the burdens of the work to stop bloodshed, reconstruct societies, police conflicts, train armies, provide legal frameworks, uphold governance standards and promote human rights. The creation of the United Nations is as timely now as it was 58 years ago.

Schlesinger is the director of the World Policy Institute at the New School University and author of “Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations.”

Bush gambled big—and lost

What a difference a year makes. On Sept. 12, 2002, President Bush traveled to the United Nations and declared that the world body would be “irrelevant” if it didn’t jump on his war bandwagon. The United Nations said “no,” the war started, and yet Bush went back anyway, asking the suddenly relevant United Nations for help.

Why did he do it?

Easy. He’s in big trouble. According to a new Gallup Poll, his approval/disapproval rating is 50/47. Indeed, he loses in head-to-head match-ups with both Wesley Clark and John Kerry—who, perhaps not coincidentally, are the two candidates in the race who went off to fight in Vietnam, back in the days when baby boomers had to decide whether to risk everything for their country.

Bush is in trouble because he gambled, gambled big—and lost. He overplayed his war cards.

After 9/11, the world rallied to America’s side. Foreigners laid wreaths and lighted candles in front of U.S. embassies; the French newspaper *Le Monde* published a front-page editorial headlined, “We are all Americans.” The German foreign minister, a member of the Green Party, sat in the Oval Office, wearing red, white and blue ribbons, and offered “unlimited solidarity.” NATO mobilized for America. The United Nations condemned the 9/11 attack and endorsed American action against the terrorists.

Within weeks, the Taliban and al-Qaida were gone from power in Afghanistan. If Bush had stopped there, he could have seized the moment to build a new world order based on collective defense against terrorism, a global alliance of countries wanting their big-city skylines to remain intact. And 90 percent of the countries in the world would have clamored to join, isolating the true rogues.

But instead, he went down a different path. Spurning the multilateral approach that worked in Afghanistan—and still works, as measured by the polynational contingent of troops pulling peacekeeping duty to this day—he decided that the United States would go after Iraq, with or without the world. His neoconservative advisers and propagandists convinced him that he was another Winston Churchill, destined for world-historical greatness—if he just followed their unilateral-war guidance.

So the Texan spent 2002 campaigning for a fight with Iraq. He gained support in the United States, even as he lost it around the world. Muslim allies such as Turkey peeled away. The U.N. Security Council opposed him; he couldn’t even get the vote of

By **JAMES P. PINKERTON**
Special to Newsday

Pinkerton is a Newsday columnist.



his “friend,” Russian chief Vladimir Putin. Parenthetically, one must note with wonder that Bush has never figured out that the ex-KGB man has been playing him like a balalaika. It can be said that no president has been so trusting of the Russians since Franklin D. Roosevelt clinked glasses with Josef Stalin during World War II.

And then of course, besotted with speechwriter-generated “moral clarity,” Bush went to war anyway. The plan was to catch or kill Saddam Hussein, expose the weapons of mass destruction and get out clean. By now, the United States was supposed to have maybe 30,000 troops overseeing happy Iraqis electing a pro-American government and paying for their own reconstruction with oil money.

None of those optimistic scenarios has come true. The president’s latest rationale is that the war was fought to secure human rights in Iraq. His hard-core supporters have fallen loyally into line—although curiously, most opposed helping Liberia, and none demand action against mass slaughter in Congo.

And Bush now has enemies on the right, too. Many of the neoconservatives who urged him into Iraq are now urging him to invade Syria and/or Iran—and making no secret of their disappointment in his not heeding them. Neo-hawk Mark Helprin, for example, writing in the *Claremont Review of Books*, dismisses Bush’s entire Middle East policy as “ill-conceived” in its Iraq-only focus.

That’s what happens when a big mission fails. The opponents get close for the haymaker, and Machiavellian supporters get out of the way. And incidentally, he won’t get much out of the United Nations.

Bush might still hunker down at home, play to his base and win re-election. But his foreign policy “vision” has been shattered. The pieces that once reflected his own vain posturing are strewn across America. They are drenched in blood but, of course, it’s not Bush’s.

A new disciplined day in America

TEN - HUT!
Location: Campaign HQ of Gen. Wesley K. Clark.
Time: 0500 Hours.
Columnist reporting for interview, sir.
At ease, son.

Request permission to interview the general, sir.
Permission granted. Smoke ‘em if you got ‘em.
Thank you, sir. First question: What do you think is the biggest problem facing the country today?

We’re soft, that’s what wrong with us. We have no discipline. We’ve gotten flabby and lazy.

So what would you do about that, general?
Do about it? I’ll tell you what I’ll do about it — boot camp. Boot camp?

Twelve weeks, mandatory for every man, woman and child, KP, calisthenics, 25-mile hikes. We’ll turn these puke civilians into citizens this country can be proud of.

Do you think people would go along with that, general?
Stupid question, son. Drop down and give me 25 pushups. Whew! Next question . . . whew! . . . homeland security . . . whew!

Homeland security! We got people shipping themselves around the country in crates. We got news organizations smuggling radioactive material all over the place undetected. Disney World has tighter security than we do.

How would you rectify that, general?
First, we establish a perimeter, dig some foxholes, string some barbed wire. Then we make everyone ages 18-55 pull guard duty. Finally, we create a national password—blue mambo. You don’t know the password, you don’t get in.

By **JIM SHEA**
The Hartford Courant

Shea is a columnist for The Hartford Courant.



General, what would you do about the growing divide among the classes?

There are no classes in this man’s America. There are officers, and there are enlisted personnel. And everyone will know who’s who by their uniform.

Uniform?
Khakis and dress whites; Hawaiian shirts if you’re on R&R. If you are elected . . .

If, son? There’s no if in this man’s America. Drop down and give me another 25.

Whew! When you are . . . whew! . . . elected . . . whew! . . . how will you deal with a Republican controlled Congress?

Good, question, son, good question.

Thank God.

I’ll tell you how I’ll deal with Congress. First, I’ll give them a chance to surrender.

Surrender? And if they don’t?

Then we attack, launch Operation Gasbag.

You’d attack Congress?

Darn straight, although I’d get the United Nations behind me first.

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DPH ups campaign vs cervical cancer

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Women who have multiple sexual partners or whose partners have had multiple sexual partners are strongly advised to seek medical care to prevent cervical cancer.

This, following findings that having multiple sexual partners is a top risk factor for cervical cancer.

Other factors are: intercourse at an early age, smoking, had the first child after the age of 30, compromised immune system, women who have not had a pap smear in three years or more, or those whose partners are infected with human papilloma virus (a warts-causing virus), and or have had multiple sexual partners.

Deputy secretary for public health administration Pete Untalan said the best defense against the disease is for high-risk women to get a yearly pap smear examination.

Fortunately, he said, cervical cancer is completely preventable, adding that in most cases, it usually develops slowly over many years.

"Annual pap smear is your best protection...if you're in one of the high-risk groups, it is vitally important that you get examined regularly," he advised.

He issued the advisory as the department observes January as National Cervical Awareness Month.

During the month, presentations on cervical cancer can be done in offices by calling the CNMI Cancer Association at 682-0050.

Pap smear tests can be done at Northern and Southern Community Wellness centers, and the CHC Women's Clinic which has available evening schedules.

Appointments can also be made with DPH Breast and Cervical Screening Program at 236-8727/8731.

This, as the DPH awaits for new federal funding for the program.

The department has twice submitted a new application for another five-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente signs a proclamation document that endorses January as Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. Health experts advised women who fall under the cervical cancer high-risk groups to take regular checks, noting that it is their best protection against the disease.

year grant for the program, but these were both denied.

The department said that the grant is highly competitive. The initial five-year program expired in 2002. DPH said, though, that there was still a leftover money to fund the program.

At the same time, the department lobbied for \$500,000 local funding

under the 2004 budget.

The DPH received some \$1 million federal funding for the implementation of the program in the last five years.

The department cited that Carolinian and Chamorro women have very high rate of breast and cervical cancer cases compared to other women in

other places.

Recent data showed that there were 1,800 women from low-income families who are enrolled in the prevention program. With sufficient funding, the department aims to expand the program to cover all high-risk women regardless of their social background.

Kinoshita said that since mid-December 2002, JAL and JALWays have been operating larger aircrafts from Japan to Saipan due to high tourist demand.

"The passengers number in January 2003 is the best record of JAL Saipan airport office since 1977, when JAL's first flight came to Saipan. It exceeded the record 19,671, which was in August 1999," he pointed out.

He added that tourist passengers from Japan rose by almost 40 percent

in December 2002 compared to the same figure in 2001, with the air service provided by Japan Airlines and JALWays being increased to accommodate higher passenger demand.

Kinoshita said that, from Tokyo alone, passenger haul in December 2002 increased by 35 percent from 6,923 passengers in December 2001 to 10,744 during the same month in 2002.

Passenger haul from Osaka in-

creased by 51 percent in December 2002, from 6,923 during the same period in 2001 to 10,744 in 2002. Also, JAL and JALWays provided 1,012 extra flights in 2002 compared to 667 in 2001.

All in all, the airline company brought in 17,981 passengers from Japan in December 2002 compared to the 10,643 and 17,408 during the same month in 2001 and 2000 respectively.

Philip I. Ngeluk, 33, of Susupe, is facing two counts of disturbing the peace, which he allegedly committed on Aug. 5 and Oct. 5 last year. The AGO charged Joseph B. Pangelinan, 47, of Dandan, with a count each of assault and battery and disturbing the peace he allegedly committed last Oct. 28.

Meanwhile, Hutton filed a count of criminal contempt of court charge against 39-year-old Raymond Tomokane of Gualo Rai, whom the prosecutor accused of violating a court order prohibiting the defendant from contacting, telephoning or disturbing a woman. Hutton additionally charged Tomokane with disturbing the peace, an offense the defendant allegedly committed last Nov. 19.

ASYLUM

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prescribed by law.

The governor's legal counsel, Steve Newman, also stressed in yesterday's session that the measure would not require or allow the Commonwealth to permit an asylum seeker to gain access to the U.S. mainland and does not offer a means of protection if claimed for a non-legitimate purpose.

Villagomez, who had authored the bill, assured that the bill would not open the way for abuse by aliens as it would allow the CNMI government to thoroughly scrutinize all asylum applicants and screen out those who are actually applying for economic and other reasons, other than to flee persecution in their own countries.

S.B. 13-135 was pre-filed and introduced on March 28, 2003. Another version was again pre-filed on April 7, 2003. It was passed by the Senate on April 9, 2003, followed by the House on May 13, 2003. Soon after, the Senate substituted the bill with another version to clarify the bill's format. This was the version that finally passed. It now goes to Gov. Juan N. Babauta for passage into law.

GOVT

From Page 1

Within two days, he said, the department is expected to finish the certification of billings. The DPH would then submit the documents to the finance department for disbursement of funds.

Last Friday, the DoF released \$100,000 each to Paras and Saipan Employment Agency Services—the two leading nursing agencies in the CNMI whose contracts had expired on Dec. 31, 2003.

As of that date, DPH reportedly owed Paras some \$329,000 and SEAS some \$500,000.

Meantime, Paras president Juan T. Guerrero said he is confident about the accuracy of his agency's billings. "We're very diligent with our billings. Everything has been approved by the CHC. But they can look at it again."

The government terminated its contracts with agencies in view of its goal to shift to direct hiring effective Jan. 1, 2004.

This developed as the Department of Labor and the Attorney General's Office issued temporary working authorizations to some 70 agency nurses pending negotiations between the CHC and the agencies for consensual transfer and settlement agreements.

This came after the government opened a compliance case against the agencies over some unpaid wages.

Guerrero said his employees never filed a case against his company. He looks at the compliance case filing as a way of the government to legally keep agency nurses.

As of now, Paras still enlists 38 nonresident and eight local nursing staff for CHC. Of these, 16 continue to stay at a Paras-paid apartment.

Meantime, 36 nurses who were directly hired from the Philippines arrived last week, filling in the vacant FTEs in the department.

The House of Representatives approved on Dec. 31 a joint resolution that would increase the CHC slots or FTEs for nurses by 65.

The government said it would source the additional funding needed from lapsed, unexpended, and unobligated funds, using the governor's reprogramming authority.

The direct hiring would result in the government incurring some \$3 million additional cost a year.

MORE

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36-percent increase from the 7,916 in January 2002. The airlines also brought in 7,267 tourists from Osaka, which 42 percent up from 4,166 during the same period last year.

These bring JAL and JALways' passenger traffic to a total of 20,131 passengers in January 2003—at least 7,400 more tourists compared with 12,668 passengers in January 2002.

CRIMINAL

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persons with a count each of theft: Bo Fei Li, 56, and Genoven Cruz, 31, both of Dandan; Custer Madracheluib, 19, of Sadog Tasi; and Xiu Ying Zhang, 33, of Garapan.

Bo allegedly stole a hardware item from the Joeten Ace Hardware in Susupe July 30 last year, while Cruz allegedly took four packs of shampoo from San Jose Mart last July 20. The AGO accused Madracheluib of stealing pairs of shoes from the Joeten Shopping Center last Sept. 18, while Xiu allegedly took a bottle of cooking wine and two packs of sausage from the Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center.

Hutton filed two theft counts against Anderson C. Ruben, a 20-year-old resident of Garapan. Ruben allegedly stole a radio cassette player and two speakers from the Feng Hua Market in San Jose last Aug. 9.

Tina Lynn Ada, 21, of Gualo Rai, faces two counts of forgery involving two checks worth \$450 and \$140. Last Aug. 8, she allegedly stole two blank checks belonging to Juan and Maria Ada. The AGO additionally charged her with a theft count.

Meanwhile, Hutton charged Dennis A. Taisacan, 37, of Koblerville, with theft of service for not paying his bill at the Tai Hu Shark's Fin Restaurant in Chalan Kanoa last Nov. 9. The chief prosecutor also lodged criminal mischief

and disturbing the peace charges against Taisacan for allegedly intentionally damaging glass cups, pitchers and food orders at the restaurant, annoying the establishment's customers and staff.

The AGO also lodged disturbing the peace and related charges against five men who allegedly victimized women.

Fifty-year-old Jose S. Basa of Koblerville is facing two counts each of assault and battery and disturbing the peace charges for allegedly attacking a woman on Jan. 31 last year. The AGO lodged three disturbing the peace counts against Hans Ngiramos of San Jose, who celebrates his 35th birthday today. Ngiramos allegedly committed the crime against a woman on three occasions last year: April 12, July 31 and Aug. 30.

Salty water due to overdrilling, wrong piping

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

Saltiness of water on Saipan is not really due to its close proximity to the sea, but due to overdrilling and improper well development, authorities said.

Capital improvement project management consultant and CNMI water task force member Charles Jordan said existing wells on the island are generally over pumped.

He said wells also do not follow standard depths and size.

“Wells are over pumped,” he said, noting that it can be solved by focusing on well

optimization, which is listed as among the first seven priorities by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to obtain a 24-hour water supply on the island.

“Well optimization will address this area, making sure the wells’ proper depth and size,” he said.

Taekwang Heavy Industries, a proponent of water desalination on Saipan, made a similar observation when asked about the water situation.

“It’s because of overdrilling,” Taekwang executive director Choong Rae Kim said in a recent media briefing.

Overdrilling, he said, allows the seawater to seep into the water generation wells.

The Water Task Force, which projects to provide a 24-hour water supply on Saipan in two years without resorting to desalination project, said the current water crisis in the CNMI is not a result of the lack of water but of poor management.

The task force cited that the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. produces at least 10 million gallons of water everyday but about half of it is lost due to leaks.

The task force’s major fo-

cus is to install accurate metering system, solve leak problem, and install more water tanks.

Meantime, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reported that the CUC can obtain a 24-hour a day water supply if it focuses on the first seven—out of 25 recommendations—beginning 2003.

These priority projects include technical assistance to CUC, well optimization, well field isolation study, test-drilling and well-field development, rainwater catchment systems, water conservation and leak correction, and metering pro-

gram and distribution main leak repair.

The seven projects cost some \$13 million.

The whole study lists down 25 different projects to be implemented up to middle of 2023, costing \$94 million.

Jordan earlier said that although desalination is among the projects identified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it is not listed as a priority.

“I’d say it’s premature to do that at this time,” said Jordan.

Taekwang, whose proposed desalination project generated widespread criticisms,

was found earlier by the CUC to have the most responsive proposal compared with three other bidders.

The contract would commit the CUC into buying 3 millions gallons of water daily from the contractor at \$7.9 per 1,000 gallons, or a daily cost of \$25,000 for at least 15 years.

The CUC received four proposals for the desalination plant from Taekwang, New York-based Mitsui USA, Tele-source, and San Diego-based GET Inc.

Taekwang for its part said that VVC technology is the best for Saipan in view of the existing water contamination in the project site in Lower Base.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of MVA's Board of Directors and staff pose for a photo with Ivan Quichocho, general manager of Continental Airlines, center, following a presentation to recognize MVA's Top Ten contributing members for fiscal year 2003. Representing MVA were, left to right, PR & Community Programs manager Martin Duenas, marketing manager Wayne Pangelinan, deputy managing director Vicky Benavente, director Roberta Guerrero, director James Lin, and managing director Jonas Ogren.

HANMI initiates scholarship

The Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands donated over \$10,000 to the Northern Marianas College as seed money for a HANMI-initiated program.

This program is meant to help boost tourism by allowing students to take up hotel management and culinary arts courses that would enable them to be employed in the hospitality industry once they graduate.

HANMI chairman Ron Sablan said members of the association contributed to the association’s tourism scholarship fund through the government’s education tax credit program under Public Law 10-13. This al-

lows them to donate up to \$5,000 of their business gross revenue tax to an educational institution of their choice.

But since the law does not allow donors to dictate how the money should be spent, the NMC board adopted a resolution creating the program and allotting the funds to the undertaking, Sablan said.

“To make this program effective and create an incentive for students to look at hotel management and culinary arts as a career, we decided to put this program together and work with NMC to create a tourism scholarship fund,” said Sablan. “This is just the start,”

he added, referring to the initial donation to NMC. “We’re looking at HANMI donating over \$50,000 next year.”

The scholarship allows students to enter into an internship program with HANMI member hotels of their choice. “Any recipient who graduates will be guaranteed a job,” said Sablan.

He said the amount could have been bigger had arrangements with HANMI members been finalized earlier. “We had to go through an intricate process of finalizing the curriculum for the program.”

He said it was not until November last year that the donation setup was formed, at which time some members had already made tax credit contributions to other schools.

NMC has created the Tourism Program Advisory Council and the Tourism Scholarship Board which will supervise the scholarship and on which HANMI has representation, Sablan said.

Larry Lee, NMC tourism instructor, will facilitate the program and help ensure fund accountability.

The Marianas Visitors Authority, a non-profit public corporation mandated to promote tourism and attract tourists to the Northern Marianas, recently recognized the top ten contributors for fiscal year 2003.

The members contributed services and products, such as airline tickets, hotel accommodations and optional tours to promote the Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Of the 226 contributing members of MVA for fiscal year 2003, the top contributors recognized were Continental Airlines, SandCastle Saipan, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Asiana Airlines, Northwest Airlines, Dai-Ichi Hotel Saipan Beach, Hotel Nikko Saipan, Marianas Resort Hotel & Spa, Aqua Resort Club Saipan, and Couture Naoco formerly Fukada Wedding.

“The marketing and advertising of the CNMI is greatly strengthened by the support provided by all the MVA members. Despite the challenges that faced our tourism industry last year, MVA’s members came forward to assist us in our promotional efforts. It is important to recognize and appreciate our membership’s unwavering support,” said MVA managing director Jonas Ogren.

dynasty

rms

MHS classes resume on Jan. 12

All parents and legal guardians of Marianas High School students are informed that their children are required to visit the counseling office on Wednesday, January 7, or Thursday, January 8, to pick up class schedules for the new semester.

Classes will resume on Monday, January 12.

Additionally, Marianas High School will host an open house on Wednesday, January 14, from 3pm to 6pm. During this time, report cards will be distributed.

Students are reminded that all obligations must be cleared and all textbooks should be returned before schedules or grades are released.

Mobil donates to Cash for Trash Program

Mobil Oil Micronesia recently donated \$1,000 to the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Cash for Trash program.

Cecil Bamba Suda, Mobil's public relations and government affairs manager, hand-delivered the donation to Chamber president Jay B. Jones and the chamber's environmental committee chairperson, Becky Lizama.

Other major donors for the program

this year include Allied Insurance/Takagi and Associates, Ben's International Corporation, Chong's Corporation, Chung Nam Corporation, Coastal Resources Management, DFS Saipan Limited, First Hawaiian Bank, Hyatt, Marianas Visitors Authority, Micronesian Environmental Services, and the Saipan Garment Manufacturers Association.

The Cash for Trash is a program for

non-profit organizations to help keep Saipan clean. The program involves planting trees as well as cleaning beach sites or road strips. In return, the organizations receive \$200 for their effort of trying to keep Saipan beautiful for both tourists and residents to enjoy.

The Saipan Major League Baseball Association participated in the program and stated, "as a dedicated team, we

are thankful to have played a role in the beautification of Saipan. The team has learned much from this experience such as helping to build team chemistry and show our young men the value of protecting the environment."

Coach Ryan Nisperos of the San Antonio Sixers I and II also said, "the clean up drive was not only a way to raise the entrance fee the kids needed but it also

allowed the kids to help the community to produce a clean and pristine environment for the islands. This is a good way for our team to get closer to our community."

If you are interested in participating in this program, please drop by the Saipan Chamber of Commerce office on the First Floor of the Family building in Garapan or you can call 233-7150 for more information.



SWEET SUNRISE

The sun takes its first rise of the year on a clear Thursday morning, January 1, 2004, in this photo taken atop the Mt. Tapochao. The sun came out a bit late than its estimated rise at 5:40am, which was witnessed by several Saipan residents and tourists.

LIBERTY DONES

Palau to stamp out alien fish species

KOROR, Palau (Palau Horizon/PIR)—The Palau Bureau of Agriculture as well as other government and non-government agencies are drafting an action plan that will guide the efforts to eradicate tilapia.

Agriculture Director Herman Francisco said the Tilapia Eradication Team met on Monday, Jan. 5, to discuss the plan.

The agriculture bureau has been tasked by President Tommy Remengesau to spearhead the eradication of tilapia, which is found at several sites in Palau.

The tilapia is considered harmful to other marine life forms in Palau and can live in fresh and salt waters.

It is an aggressive fish and it "out-competes" and displaces other endangered and protected fresh and salt-water organisms.

It was brought to Palau without a permit, making it an illegally introduced species.

The bureau's Tarita Holm said possible tilapia breeding sites have been or will be visited to gather more information on how to carry out the eradication.

Recently, the Tilapia Eradication Team visited four sites where tilapia may be found—Ngesaol, PTC old Japanese dry dock, PTC quarry pond, and PTC barracks pond.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife

Protection, which is a part of the team, will also survey at least eight sites, all in Koror, to determine if there are any other tilapia areas.

Holm said one of the eradication methods they have been considering is a chemical called Rotenone to poison the tilapia.

Previously, the government used chlorine and dynamite, to no avail.

The public is urged to report any sightings of the tilapia to the agriculture bureau at (680) 488-2504 and (680) 488-8171.

Those who keep tilapias in fish tanks should bring them to the bureau, which will replace them with non-invasive native species.

Cyclone brushes Samoa, heads for Tonga



The first Tropical cyclone of the season swept past the rural Samoan island of Savaii with heavy winds overnight.

Weather forecasters had no immediate reports of damage from cyclone Heta.

Coastal villages on the Western Samoan island of Savai'i narrowly escaped the full force of the storm.

Heta passed less than 30 kilometers from the main village on Samoa's largest island, bringing waves of five meters and winds gusting to 100 kilometers an hour.

Villagers enacted emergency plans, moving to higher ground to escape destructive winds which have uprooted

trees, power lines and unroofed houses.

The winds damaged the island's cyclone tracking device but Samoa's meteorological bureau says satellite imaging has the cyclone tending south-southwest.

The Bureau says if the storm continues on its present course, it could reach the islands of Fiji, 250 kilometers away, in the next 12 hours.

Heta is the first cyclone to threaten Samoa in nearly a decade.

Cyclones Ofa in 1990 and Val in 1991 were the last major storms to hit the country and nearly bankrupted its economy, causing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of damage.

Savai'i was badly hit by both cyclones.

According to the Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Honolulu, Heta last night was packing maximum sustained winds of 125 knots with gusts up to 150 knots. The storm was intensifying, moving southwest from the Samoan islands toward Tonga and the French possessions of Wallis and Futuna.

Tonga and Wallis have been warned to expect high winds and heavy rain.

Samoa's international airport has been closed and all sea travel between the islands and American Samoa has been cancelled.

Gale warnings remain in place throughout Samoa, although the eye of the cyclone is expected to miss the country and head towards Niue. **(Radio Australia/PIR)**



Niue First Lady Leone Tofuola Vivian dies

ALOFI, Niue (Niue News/PIR)—Niue's First Lady Leone Tofuola Vivian, the wife of Premier Young Vivian, has died in Auckland after a long illness.

Leone Tofuola Vivian, also known as Ikiua, was a stalwart of the Ekalesia Church in Hakupu Atua and made a life-long contribution to the development of women's affairs on Niue.

Vivian's initial work with promoting the Hakupu fiafia nights for tourists resulted in the establishment of a weekly event that has provided a regular income for village families.

Vivian supported her husband during his 31-year career in island politics.

She is survived by her husband, Premier Young Vivian, two daughters and four sons.

The premier has been at his wife's side in Auckland for the past month.

Bainimarama clarifies push to prosecute

SUVA, Fiji (Radio Fiji/PIR)—Fiji Army Commander Voreqe Bainimarama has assured the nation that he is not threatening the public with his recent statement about the May 2000 coup.

Commodore Bainimarama had said he is determined to bring to justice all who were involved in the uprising.

Bainimarama clarified that it is not his or the army's intention to threaten any members of the public irrespective of their races.

He said the institution will always fight for the truth to see that justice prevails in the country.

According to the commander, only those who feel threatened are those involved in the illegal activities that the Army is against.

The Army chief said the military will not back down in its pursuit to bring to justice those involved in the 2000 coup.

Chaudhry pushes for more "Talanoa" talks

SUVA, Fiji (Fijilive/PIR)—The National Federation Party said there should be more political parties involved in the Talanoa Talks to discuss issues affecting the nation.

Party leader Prem Singh said not only political leaders, but social leaders need to be involved as well.

Singh said it's important to have pending issues resolved as soon as possible, given the deadlock in talks between Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and Labour leader Mahendra

Chaudhry.

"The Talanoa sessions between the SDL and Fiji Labour Party leaders have over a period of time proved futile because nothing has been achieved. It's solely because the two political parties do not want to resolve these issues. It is in the best interest of the FLP and the SDL to play the race card and polarize the issue."

Fiji to sign US exemption from int'l court

SUVA, Fiji (Fijilive/PIR)—Fiji has forged a bilateral agreement with the United States to exempt Americans from trial by the International Criminal Court.

The signing of the agreement is expected later in the year, Foreign Affairs minister Kaliopate Tavola confirmed.

Tavola said the agreement did not contravene the 1998 Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court and which Fiji is a signatory to.

"The agreement was non-reciprocal, meaning we are still committed under the provisions of the Rome Statute," he said. "So we are still bound to the ICC, but what we have done is build a bilateral credit with the United States."

Tavola said Fiji wanted to forge stronger ties with the United States because it would be in good standing when it eventually approaches the Americans for assistance.

Fiji is looking to the U.S. to boost its sugar and garment industry in preferential agreements.

Nauru hunger strike in fourth week

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—The Australian Immigration Department said six asylum seekers on the Pacific island of Nauru have decided to pull out of a hunger strike.

As Matthew Eaton reported, the protest has entered its fourth week.

It's not yet clear why the latest six men decided to stop their protest against being refused protection visas.

The Immigration Department said no reasons were given but stressed that it was not negotiating with the hunger strikers, merely urging them to cease their protest.

Last week, four men from Afghanistan withdrew from the hunger strike after learning the UNHCR is reassessing their cases.

But four men who began the hunger strike more than three weeks ago by sewing their lips together, have threatened to sew their eyes shut on January the 10th if their cases aren't reviewed.

Business

Labor Dept. plans to end OT controversy in March

By **KIRSTIN DOWNEY**
THE WASHINGTON POST

The Labor Department plans to issue a controversial final rule changing the Fair Labor Standards Act's overtime provisions by the end of March, according to a regulatory plan published by the agency last week in the Federal Register. The rule, which would redefine who must receive overtime pay, has drawn opposition in the House and Senate by many Democrats and some Republicans.

We've said all along we hoped to have a final rule com-

pleted by the first quarter of 2003, and that's still our plan," said Victoria Lipnic, assistant secretary of labor for employment standards. She hinted that the rules may be modified somewhat to reflect concerns raised by critics but would not be more specific.

"We're certainly not deaf to Congress and to the debate in Congress and what members of Congress are hearing from their constituents," Lipnic said.

She said that the 1938 law needs to be revised and updated because the economy today is different from when the law was enacted and that confusion over

who should qualify for overtime has led to lawsuits. Changes in the overtime rules eventually could affect millions of workers nationwide. About 11 million workers received overtime pay in 2002. The administration has proposed changes that would end mandatory overtime pay for many who now qualify but would expand overtime coverage to other workers.

Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Pa., chairman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on labor, health and human services, and education, said he intends to call a hearing on the issue on Jan. 20, the day the Senate comes

back into session. He said he wants a full airing of the debate, including testimony by employers, workers, Labor Department officials and economists, to bring "some clarity" to the proposal.

"I believe we need a revision of the regulations, but this is a bad time to be cutting back on overtime when so many workers are relying on overtime for their sustenance," Specter said. He said he wonders whether it is wise to cut workers' discretionary spending now, "given the fragility of the economy."

Specter said his efforts to discuss the issue with Bush ad-

ministration officials had been fruitless. "I've been in touch with the White House, but so far, there's no give," he said.

"It's really a pitched battle over a little time span," Specter said. "That's what's happening in this legislative process."

Labor advocates have vowed to keep fighting the proposed changes, either through legislation or litigation.

"Nothing is off the table as far as we're concerned," said Christine Owens, the AFL-CIO's public policy director.

The Bush administration announced its plan to rewrite the Fair Labor Standards Act in March. In the fall, both the House and Senate voted to quash the department's proposal, which critics say could result in 8 million American workers losing their right to time-and-a-half pay when they work more than 40 hours in a single week. Among the new rules is a provision that would allow employers to redefine workers who hold "a position of responsibility" as exempt from overtime. Workers earning more than \$65,000 a year could lose overtime pay under the rules.

Proskauer Rose LLP, a law firm that represents employers, has told its clients that all the changes would be beneficial to employers.

The Labor Department says 1.3 million low-wage workers could become newly eligible for overtime pay because the rules would update wage levels last reviewed in 1975. Under the current rules, workers who

earned less than \$8,060 a year are automatically eligible for overtime. The new rule would raise the cap to \$22,100. The Labor Department says 644,000 workers could lose their overtime pay because of how their jobs are defined.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, sought to scuttle the Labor Department's effort by blocking funding for implementing it, winning votes in the House and Senate, which took the issue into the appropriations process. Under intense pressure from the White House and the Republican leadership, which strongly supports changing the overtime law, the language blocking the funding was stripped from the omnibus appropriations bill. The bill passed the House in a 242 to 176 vote in early December, paving the way for the Labor Department to proceed with its plans. The Senate still must vote on the final appropriations bill.

Tens of thousands of workers wrote the Labor Department to oppose the revision, and about a quarter of a million have petitioned the White House to try to stop it. Dozens of business trade groups support the changes and have lobbied hard for them. Among the groups urging the Labor Department to make the changes are the National Retail Federation, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Restaurant Association and the Society for Human Resource Management.

TOY (STORE) FOR SALE

People pass a statue of a teddy bear and a doorman dressed as a toy soldier as they enter the FAO Schwarz store on Fifth Avenue in New York Monday, Nov. 10, 2003. FAO Inc. will sell its flagship Manhattan toy store, FAO Schwarz, along with some other assets for \$20 million, the company announced Friday, Dec. 26, 2003. The deal with VGACS Acquisition Inc., a subsidiary of D.E. Shaw Laminar Portfolios LLC, also includes a store in the Forum Shops in Las Vegas, FAO Schwarz's signature clocktowers and its Internet and catalog businesses.

AP



Official: Conditions may keep rates low

By **JEANNINE AVERSA**
AP WRITER

With inflation tame and the fragile job market healing, the Federal Reserve has room to hold a main short-term interest rate near rock-bottom levels for some time, a Fed policy-maker said Sunday.

The federal funds rate, the Fed's main lever for influencing economic activity, now stands at 1 percent, a 45-year low. The funds rate is the interest banks charge each other for overnight loans.

Although many economists agree that the Fed will hold the funds rate steady Jan. 27-28, its first meeting of the year, they differ on the future course of interest rate policy. Some believe the Fed may opt to start inching rates up in June, while others believe the central bank will stay on the sidelines into 2005.

"For now, I believe that the Federal Reserve has the luxury

of being patient," Ben Bernanke, a member of the Fed's board of governors, said in a speech to economists meeting in San Diego.

Bernanke is a member of the Federal Open Market Committee, the group headed by Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan that sets interest rate policy in the United States.

"An accommodative monetary policy is needed, in my view, to support the ongoing recovery, particularly in the labor market," Bernanke said. "At the same time, the risks of policy accommodation seem low, as inflation is low and inflation pressures seem quite subdued."

After several false starts, the economy's comeback from the 2001 recession probably began in earnest in the summer of 2003, Bernanke said. "The odds ... have increased that 2003 will be remembered as the year when this recovery turned the corner,"

CDA

CUC MEET

Take tax breaks for costs of investing

As you hammer out your tax bill this year, be sure to take advantage of tax breaks on the costs of investing.

Investing can be a pricey endeavor, requiring you to shell out money for everything from initial sales commissions to yearly management fees. Fortunately, the government provides a few loopholes that let taxpayers retrieve some of their investment costs through their yearly tax returns. Tax-savvy people can use these tricks to regain money on everything from the gas guzzled to visit their brokers to the interest paid to invest on margin (loans provided by brokerage houses).

But beware: Uncle Sam this year dramatically reduced the tax benefit of investing on margin. People who are accustomed to taking a tax deduction for investing with borrowed money will likely find it significantly less beneficial than ever before.

Yet, taxpayers appear to be totally unaware of this change in

the tax law, said Jeffrey Kelson, Northeast regional tax director with tax firm BDO Seidman in New York City. Indeed, margin debt rose 25 percent in July even though tax law changes make this strategy more expensive than ever, according to data from the National Association of Securities Dealers.

"I think a lot of taxpayers will be surprised in April," said Kelson.

The first type of write-off that can help you reduce your investment costs is known as the miscellaneous itemized deduction. The name is fitting because it consists of tax breaks for seemingly random expenses.

For example, you may use this strategy to recover the cost of professional investment advice or to get money back on accounting and legal fees caused by your investment activities. You might even be able to get a tax break on the cost of subscriptions to publications that help you invest.

Don't try to guess what expenses qualify for this write-off.

The items that fall under this provision are truly miscellaneous, so it's best to check with the Internal Revenue Service first. For example, taxpayers can deduct transportation costs to visit their investment adviser's office, but not to travel to and from shareholder meetings.

As with all things tax-related, you have to meet certain criteria to take full advantage of this loophole. Miscellaneous items are deductible only if they total more than 2 percent of your adjusted gross income, or AGI. If they do, you can deduct anything in excess of that 2 percent.

So say your AGI is \$75,000 and you have accrued \$4,000 in miscellaneous expenses in 2003. Because 2 percent of \$75,000 equals \$1,500, you would qualify to take the deduction for the remaining amount, or \$2,500.

If your miscellaneous items this year don't exceed 2 percent of your AGI, you can't benefit from this deduction.

If you used margin to invest this year, you may be entitled to

deduct the cost of the interest you paid on the loan. The basic rule for this deduction says that the amount you deduct cannot exceed interest and dividend income from investments for the year. So if you earned \$8,000 in bond interest and stock dividends this year, you can deduct \$8,000 worth of margin interest from your tax return in April.

Under new rules implemented this year, you can still use stock dividends to offset your margin interest, but you will pay more to do it.

Here's how the new rules work: If you use your dividend earnings to increase your margin interest deduction, you won't be allowed to benefit from the reduced dividend tax rate of 15 percent. Rather, you will have to pay ordinary income taxes on those dividends, a rate that can be as high as 35 percent this year.

The new law essentially makes people choose between two different tax breaks—using their dividends to offset their margin interest and taking the lower

dividend tax rate of 15 percent.

For most people, it no longer pays to use dividends to get a margin interest deduction, said Joseph R. Bodan, a tax partner with O'Connor Davies Munns & Dobbins in New York. "I've run the calculations and this usually never makes sense," he said. In the majority of situations, taxpayers will save more by forgoing the investment interest deduction and paying the reduced 15 percent dividend tax rate, he added.

This means fewer people will benefit from a tax deduction for investing on margin this year, and those who do will see their deduction amounts reduced significantly, tax professionals said.

Like Kelson, Bodan worries that investors aren't aware of this change, and that they'll be taken aback in April, especially since investors have been increasing their margin accounts this year. With all the changes in the tax package, this little provision has been left largely ignored, he added. (AP)

GM giving away 1,000 cars in \$50M program

By JOHN PORRETTO
AP AUTO WRITER

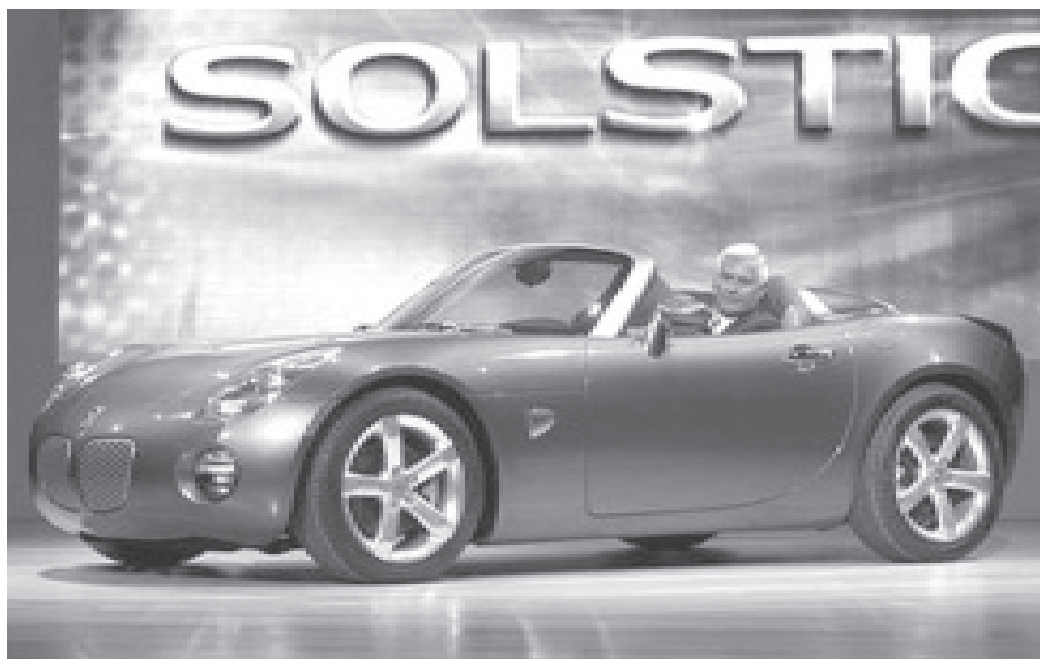
General Motors Corp. plans to give away 1,000 cars, trucks and sport utility vehicles in 56 days beginning Monday as part of a \$50 million promotion to generate showroom traffic and build awareness of its nine U.S. brands.

The world's largest automaker expects 5.5 million people to take part in the Hot Button program, which ends Feb. 29. The company said the odds of winning one of its 54 different 2004 models are about one in 5,500.

Steve Hill, GM's director for retail planning, said the company wants to close the gap between many consumers' perceptions of GM and the reality of its product portfolio. He said many buyers don't know that GM's lineup includes brands such as Saab, Saturn and Hummer.

"We need to be intrusive and get people to take notice," Hill said.

GM plans to encourage consumers to participate in the promotion with a marketing campaign that includes TV, print, Internet and direct mail advertising. To take part, consumers must visit a local GM dealership and press a



Bob Lutz, General Motors vice chairman, product development and chairman North America, drives the production 2006 Pontiac Solstice at the North American International Auto Show media preview in Detroit, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2004.

blue OnStar button in a designated promotional vehicle. OnStar, a GM subsidiary, is the nation's largest in-vehicle communications system.

Contestants will be required to provide identifying information—the last four digits of their driver's license number and home phone number—to an OnStar operator, who in turn will

tell them whether they've won.

GM said players will not be required to take a test drive or listen to a sales pitch and the identifying information will not be used in future marketing.

All GM models are included in the contest, but winning vehicles will vary. A person may play only once and only one person from a household may enter. GM

employees and immediate family members are not eligible, though GM retirees may take part.

Hill said the company hopes to increase traffic at its 7,000 dealerships by 30 to 40 percent during the promotion. Through November, GM's U.S. sales were down 1.7 percent from the same period a year ago.

"We're going to get fresh

people in the showroom we haven't had before," Hill said, adding that the automaker will continue to offer aggressive consumer incentives during the contest.

Dan Gorrell, automotive partner at the marketing research firm Strategic Vision, said GM faces several challenges in luring new buyers with the Hot Button endeavor.

While GM has several new products coming to market this year, so do Ford Motor Co., DaimlerChrysler AG's Chrysler Group and many foreign competitors. It's also difficult to win back consumers who may have written off one automaker and switched to another, he said.

"Awareness is the first point, but they need something new and different to show people," Gorrell said. "Otherwise they're going to get the same people who've stayed loyal to GM. It's really tough to break through."

GM is no stranger to large—and expensive—promotional campaigns. In 2001, GM launched its "Keep America Rolling" incentive program, which offered interest-free financing as a way to jump start sales in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Asahi Breweries and Itochu to acquire Chinese tea giant in \$420-million deal

Asahi Breweries Ltd. and Itochu Corp. will spend as much as US\$420 million to acquire a 50 percent share of one of China's largest beverage businesses, a company official said Monday.

Chinese food-and-beverage giant, Tingyi Holdings Corp., will spin off its bev-

erage business to form a new holding company by March, Asahi spokesman Toru Okajima said.

Asahi and Itochu will pay between 40 billion yen (US\$374 million) and 45 billion yen (US\$420 million) for their share in the new company, with Asahi picking about 80 percent of the

cost and Itochu shouldering the remainder, he said.

"Of all our overseas businesses, the region we are focusing most on is Asia, particularly China. We believe this investment will help us to greatly expand our business base in China," Okajima said.

Tianjin-based Tingyi had total

revenues in 2002 of US\$1.1 billion, including beverage revenues of about US\$345 million.

The company leads the Chinese market in bottled teas and is ranked fourth overall in beverages but is seeking to increase its share in other soft drinks. Asahi, Japan's largest beer brewer and a major soft drink maker, will

be able to help it develop new drink flavors and provide quality control technology, Okajima said.

Asahi has already ventured into the Chinese beer market.

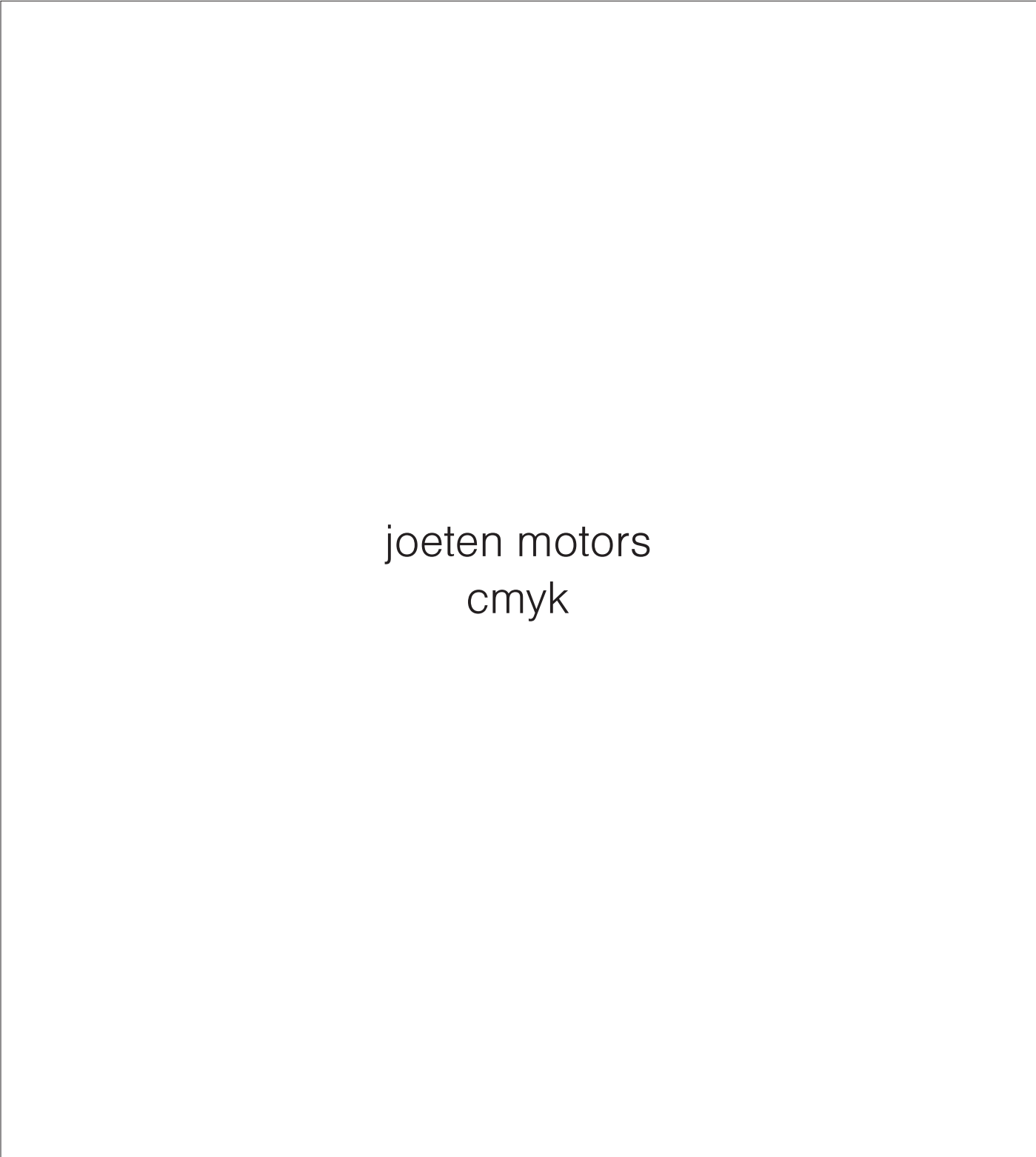
Tingyi, incorporated in the Cayman Islands, is listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. (AP)

Nation

Asia

World

Overdrive



Life & Style

Croc hunter rejects comparison to Jackson

By JAMIE TARABAY
AP WRITER

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—“Crocodile hunter” Steve Irwin, who provoked international outrage by feeding a crocodile while holding his infant son, angrily rejected any comparisons between himself and pop star Michael Jackson, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Irwin, who has survived tussles with giant pythons, poisonous snakes and crocodiles, faced an onslaught of bad publicity after feeding the 13-foot crocodile as he cradled his month-old son, Robert, on Friday.

The incident at Irwin’s popular reptile park in Beerwah, north of Brisbane, was captured on Australian television, then replayed on channels worldwide.

Viewers jammed telephone lines to vent their ire. Child welfare groups said Irwin had endangered his son. Police delivered a warning, and Queensland state authorities said they would investigate for possible violation of workplace safety laws.

However, police and the acting premier of Queensland



Australian Steve Irwin, famous for his TV show “The Crocodile Hunter” cradles his month-old son, Robert, under one arm and feeds piece of meat to a 13-foot crocodile in an image from television during Friday Jan. 2, 2004, at his Australia Zoo reptile park in Brisbane, Australia.

state, Terry Mackenroth, said no charges would be filed for the stunt.

Irwin insisted the tot was never in danger.

“I would never, ever put him in any danger, not in a million years,” Irwin told Australia’s Sunday Telegraph.

“To hear people say that it was a publicity stunt, that I’m just like Michael Jackson well, it just tears me up. It makes me sick to my stomach to be compared in that way,” Irwin was quoted as saying.

He was referring to media comparisons to Jackson’s han-

Croc hunter Irwin flees media frenzy

SYDNEY, Australia (AP)—The “Crocodile Hunter” has become the hunted. Following a weekend of bad publicity, Steve Irwin and his family retreated from the media spotlight and the public outrage he provoked by hand-feeding a crocodile Friday while holding his infant son, a spokesman for his production company said Monday.

“Steve’s gathering his

thoughts at the moment, he’s not available for comment,” John Harrison from Best Picture Show told The Associated Press.

Harrison said he has been inundated with phone calls from across Australia and around the world inquiring about Irwin, who has gained worldwide fame for his “Crocodile Hunter” show on the Animal Planet network, in which he chats excitedly about exotic and dangerous creatures

- sometimes from extremely close proximity to the beasts.

Since giving a news conference Saturday, Irwin has gone underground and refused to speak about Friday’s media stunt gone wrong.

Local media reported that Irwin left his popular reptile park in Beerwah, north of Brisbane, but his spokesman declined to comment on his whereabouts.

dling of his infant son in Berlin in November 2002. A national newspaper, The Australian, called it “a bizarre act at his Sunshine Coast zoo that mirrored Michael Jackson’s dangling of his newborn over a balcony.”

“I’m horrified,” Gloria Allred, an attorney who called for authorities to investigate the Jackson incident, was quoted as saying in New York’s Daily News Saturday. “With Michael Jackson, it seemed like an aberration. Now it appears to be a trend.”

The Sunday Telegraph also reported that after the crocodile feeding, Irwin and his American wife, Terri, told their 5-year-old

daughter, Bindi, to splash around in a pool near a crocodile pen to encourage the reptiles to swim out.

“Now flail around and look helpless, that’s the girl, good girl,” Terri Irwin was quoted as saying. “That’s my girl, Bindi Irwin, the other white meat.”

A zoo official, who was not named, was quoted by the paper as saying a gate connecting the pool to the crocodile pen had been shut.

The Irwins weren’t available for comment on Sunday. Irwin’s Australia Zoo reptile park referred all inquires to his production company, which was closed Sunday.

“You have to understand the sort of upbringing I had, the sort of upbringing my kids are going to have,” Irwin was quoted as saying in the Sunday Telegraph.

“My kids are just like me, growing up at the zoo. We have Alice the alligator living 20 meters (65 feet) from our house, we have a croc enclosure 30 meters (98 feet) from our house,” he said.

Irwin has gained worldwide fame for his “Crocodile Hunter” show on the Animal Planet network, in which he chats excitedly about exotic and dangerous creatures—sometimes from extremely close proximity to the beasts.

Children just won’t leave

The empty nest isn’t empty for long.
The semester ends.
The scholar returns.
And then:
The phone rings.

The car vanishes.
The refrigerator empties.
The candle burns at both ends.
The day breaks at noon, if then.

Although we all try to adjust, there seems to be little point to it because the nest will soon be empty again, and then we will have to adjust again and, frankly, I just don’t adjust well to adjusting, although I’m trying to adjust to that, too.

I didn’t think it would be this way.

As we drove away from the college last August, we envisioned a new stage of life, one in which we would have the freedom to come and go as we pleased, say what we would, walk around naked if we wanted (I can’t emphasize enough how figuratively I mean the latter).

But the truth is, college is not a clean break as much as a series of pauses that continue over four years - and now, it seems, possibly well beyond that.

According to a recent story in the New York Times, adulthood, as defined by such things as having a job, and an apartment, and folding your own underwear, is occurring later and later in life.

Quoting census figures, the story notes that from 1970 to 2000, the percentage of 24- to 34-year-olds living at home increased 50 percent.

The trend is so pronounced that some social scientists have begun to see the years between 18 and 34 as a new life stage, one they call “transi-

By JIM SHEA
The Hartford Courant

Shea can be reached at
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tional adulthood.”

While this new demographic arrangement has all sorts of ramifications - for example, technically, can you ground a 34-year-old? - I’ve been wondering what effect it will have on two areas in particular: dating, and serial killers.

As it stands right now, when police are looking for a serial killer all they have to do is get a list of the adult males in the vicinity who live with their parents. And, voila, case solved.

Now what? Oh, I suppose they can still go around digging up basements, but it’s just not as foolproof.

As for dating, you know, you used to be able to tell a lot about someone by seeing where, and how, they lived. Well, that is no longer going to be the case.

Granted, you may still be able to learn a lot about the parents of the person you are dating by seeing where, and how, they live. And you can probably get a sense of who the person you are dating was in high school by getting a look at his bedroom.

But key information is going to be missing (such as, what are the chances he is a serial killer)?

Yeah, it’s going to be a whole lot harder to separate the wheat from the Costanzas.

paula obit

Source: Britney to annul Vegas wedding



By **ADAM GOLDMAN**
AP WRITER

LAS VEGAS (AP)—Pop star Britney Spears married a childhood friend from Louisiana in an early morning ceremony, but quickly arranged to have it annulled, people close to the entertainer said Sunday.

The 22-year-old Spears and Jason Allen Alexander of Kentwood, La., “took a joke too far by getting married” Saturday, her record label, Jive Records, said in a statement released to “Entertainment Tonight.”

“Ms. Spears and Mr. Alexander have filed for an annulment which will become official on Monday,” read the statement by Sonia Muckle, Jive’s vice president of publicity.

George Maloof Jr., owner and operator of the Palms Casino Hotel, said Spears and Alexander got married about 5:30 a.m. Saturday at a Las Vegas wedding chapel.

“Nobody knew it was coming,” said Maloof, Spears’ good friend.

The two arranged an annulment Saturday afternoon in the presence of several people, including a Las Vegas lawyer, said a source close to Spears who

spoke on condition of anonymity. The signed annulment will be filed when the courts open Monday morning, the source said.

Spears and Alexander journeyed by limousine to the Little White Wedding Chapel on the Strip after a stop at the Ghostbar, a club in the Palms Casino Hotel. The chapel staff told the couple they couldn’t get married without a license, so they were taken to get a license and driven back to the chapel, where they were married.

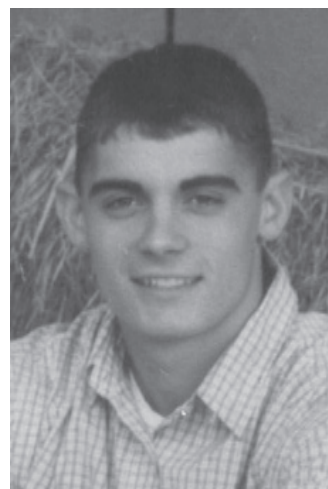
The bride wore a baseball cap and torn jeans down the aisle and was escorted by a Palms limousine driver, the source told the AP.

Malooof denied rumors that Spears was drunk and had to be carried out of the Rain nightclub inside the Palms on New Year’s Eve.

“I was with her the whole night,” he said. “None of those reports were accurate. She was just having a good time.”

Spears was still staying at the Palms and was expected to leave Sunday. Employees at the chapel declined comment.

Alexander was back in his hometown Sunday, according to his grandfather, Robert Alexander.



Alexander

“He’d been through a lot. We picked him up in New Orleans coming back and he didn’t have much to say,” the elder

Alexander told “Entertainment Tonight.”

“I wish them well,” he said. “Whatever happens, happens.”

He said Spears and Alexander had also spent Christmas Eve together.

Calls to Alexander’s family home in Kentwood were answered by a machine. His grandmother said any details about the wedding would have to come from Jason or his father.

“We know about the wedding and stuff. It’s all over the news,” Betty Alexander said.

Spears released her fourth album, “In the Zone,” last November. It debuted at the top of the album charts. She begins a concert tour March 2 in San Diego.

Jackson jury selection process attacked

LOS ANGELES (AP)—When the law speaks of defendants being entitled to a jury of their peers, it’s obvious no one contemplated Michael Jackson’s place in the justice system.

The millionaire pop music star, who is charged with committing lewd acts on a child, is in a class of his own.

But should his lawyer decide to challenge Santa Barbara County’s jury-selection process as skewed against him, it would be possible to do so on one issue: whether it systematically excludes racial minorities. That issue already has been a subject of legal challenges in Santa Bar-

bara County.

One of those cases is pending before a state appeals court. A judge found that Hispanics were being excluded from juries because of the manner in which jurors were summoned for service.

For Jackson, the problem is compounded by the lack of blacks in Santa Maria, where his case would be tried. Census figures show blacks represent just 2.3 percent of Santa Barbara County’s population.

The issue under consideration by the appellate court is a lack of follow-up to jury summonses by the jury commission-

er’s office. The commissioner sends out questionnaires to prospective panelists but does not follow up if they are not returned, said Santa Barbara attorney James Herman, a past president of the state bar.

“You wind up with a self-selecting jury pool,” he said.

The lack of follow-up results in “a volunteer jury,” said Los Angeles criminal defense attorney Steve Cron, who is familiar with the procedure. He said many Hispanics in the agricultural areas around Santa Maria are farm laborers who might not return the jury summons because they can’t

afford to take time off work for jury service.

Loyola University Law School Professor Laurie Levenson said the Jackson case could provide an unexpected twist: that Santa Barbara County residents who normally would not answer a jury summons may do so now with the high-profile trial looming.

Jackson’s arraignment on seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts on a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent is scheduled for Jan. 16. Until then, all warrants and affidavits in the case will be sealed.

‘Return of the King’ keeps No. 1 spot

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Hollywood made way for a third straight week of box-office dominance by “The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King” as no new movies opened in wide release for the New Year’s weekend.

The top 10 movies looked a lot like last week’s, led by “Rings” with \$30.8 million and Steve Martin’s remake of “Cheaper by the Dozen” in No. 2 with \$21.9 million, according to studio estimates released Sunday.

It’s typical for the New Year’s holiday weekend to be slow as far as new releases are con-

cerned, said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations Co. Most studios release their big films in time for Christmas.

This coming weekend will bring fresher offerings, such as “Chasing Liberty,” “My Baby’s Daddy” and a wider release for “Big Fish.”

“The Return of the King” has collected \$292 million in North America since it debuted Dec. 17. “This movie is like a freight train with no brakes,” said Dergarabedian, who predicted the film eventually would cross the \$1 billion mark worldwide.

“Calendar Girls” collected

\$4.6 million to rank ninth, and “Bad Santa” slipped one place to No. 10 with \$3 million.

“Calendar Girls,” a comedy about older British women who decide to make a tasteful nude calendar, was playing in only 745 locations. The audience for the film was mostly women, predominantly in their 40s and 50s, who have been motivated by word-of-mouth, said Disney head of distribution Chuck Viane.

Other films that performed strongly in limited release included “House of Sand and Fog,” with Ben Kingsley and Jennifer Connelly as two people feuding over ownership of a home. It col-

lected \$1.8 million in about 442 theaters, for a solid per-screen average of \$4,072.

Director Tim Burton’s “Big Fish,” meanwhile, has had an outstanding limited run and is heading into its first nationwide distribution next week in about 2,500 theaters. The movie, about a tall-tale spinner whose fantastic stories annoy his grown son, garnered \$2.5 million in about 125 locations, averaging \$20,000 per screen.

“That’s a huge number that means the movie is really filling those theaters, and that portends well for its first wide expansion,” Dergarabedian said.

wallace

Money should be no object for college-bound students

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: This is in response to a letter you printed from a high school junior struggling with her mother over exploring colleges. She wanted to apply to many different schools, but due to financial constraints, her mother insisted she limit herself to state-funded schools.

If that girl has the grades, she has many options open to her. Sometimes Ivy League schools give scholarships and grants that can match or better anything offered by a state school. She should also be aware that she can take out student loans that she can repay in installments after she graduates.

PROUD PARENT OF A SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT

DEAR PROUD: Bless you for wanting to help. I'm often touched by the number of people who read something in my column and reach out. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: I'm a single mom with an income under \$40,000. My twin daughters and son were all college-bound at the same time. Their school advisers told us to apply to prestigious private schools because they give the most financial aid to students. All three of my children did, and they all received their best offers from Ivy League and religious colleges.

Please tell her to go for it!

CHRIS IN YAKIMA, WASH.

DEAR CHRIS: You have already done that. I hope your letter will inspire mother and daughter and other college-bound students trying to reach for the stars. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: As a private college counselor for 25 years, I always tell students that application season is one of discovery— a time to decide what you want to get out of a college education, where you will best fit, and where you might qualify for merit scholarships.

First, apply and get accepted to the colleges of your choice. The time spent filling out applications is worth it. Students who can't afford the filing fee can request a waiver.

The girl whose letter appeared in your column can get an excellent college education if she takes the time to apply. I wish her the best of luck.

RONNIE IN HOLMDEL, N.J.

DEAR RONNIE: So do I!

DEAR ABBY: I grew up with no father. Mom was a food server with three kids to support. Even so, I was in the top 10 percent of my class. I had dreams. I wanted to attend college and escape a life of poverty.

Against all advice, I applied to five different colleges. I received full scholarships from two Ivy League schools. Room, board and tuition were covered. In four years, I was an Ivy League graduate.

I recommend the college issue of U.S. News & World Report. It not only ranks schools but also lists those that are most generous to the deserving.

The only way to ensure you won't succeed is not even to try.
EDUCATED IN ATLANTA

DEAR EDUCATED: Your last sentence says it all. Other good places to research scholarships include: www.fastweb.com, www.finaid.org, www.collegenet.com and www.fastaid.com.

I am also told that a booklet published by the American Legion, "Need a Lift?" is another terrific resource. It contains 162 pages listing scholarships, loans, grants and financial aid. (It can be purchased for \$3.95 and ordered by calling toll-free: (888) 453-4466.)

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$10 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in price.)



Dear Abby

Nelson debuts anti-war ballad



Democratic presidential hopeful Dennis Kucinich, left, sings with Willie Nelson during a campaign fundraising concert in Austin, Texas, Saturday, Jan. 3, 2004.

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Willie Nelson has premiered his new anti-war ballad at an Austin fund-raising concert for Democratic presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich.

"(Nelson) brought down the house," said Kucinich's media coordinator Susan Mainzer of the Saturday performance. "People were on their feet applauding."

Nelson has said he wrote "What Ever Happened to Peace on Earth" on Christmas Day at the Lake Elsinore, Calif., home of his in-laws.

"There was nothing but bad news, and here it was Christmas Day," Nelson told the Austin American-Statesman last month. "I said, 'There sure are a lot of babies dying and mothers crying,' and (wife) Annie said, 'That sounds like a song.'"

The song asks questions such as, "How much oil is a human life worth?"

It is the second protest song Nelson has written. He often performed his Vietnam-era protest song, "Jimmy's Road," at peace rallies during the 1991 Gulf War.

Kucinich's two-day tour through Austin started Friday. At a Capitol rally Saturday, Kucinich told several hundred people that ending combat in Iraq is among his highest goals.

Asked if his new song might cause a backlash with conservative country music fans, Nelson said, "I sure hope so. I don't care if people say, 'Who the hell does he think he is?' I know who I am."

Tammy Faye Messner hosts 'Drag Bingo'

DURHAM, N.C. (AP)—A "drag bingo" event hosted by Tammy Faye Messner drew about 700 people to raise money for an AIDS service organization.

The former Tammy Faye Bakker said she was one of the first women to speak out about caring for people with AIDS when she was on the "The PTL Club" television show with her ex-husband in the 1980s.

"I was just doing what Jesus wanted me to do," said Messner, who has remarried and lives in the Charlotte area. She divorced televangelist Jim Bakker in 1992 while he was serving a sentence for financial fraud.

About 15 drag queens participated in "An Evening with Tammy Faye," including "Sierra Nevada," who wore a royal blue dress and heels.

"I am wearing sensible shoes and this church dress because it is Tammy Faye, and because my feet still hurt from wearing 8-inch heels a month ago," Sierra Nevada said.

The event was expected to raise \$10,000 for Alliance of AIDS Services-Carolina. Those who attended filled out bingo cards as numbers



Tammy Faye Messner introduces her Yorkie, Tuppins III, to the crowd waiting at Barnes & Noble Bookstore on Sharon Road in Charlotte, N.C. in this Oct. 21, 1996, file photo.

were called by Messner, who joined the drag queens in entertaining the crowd.

'Half & Half' star recalls double Dutch

NEW YORK (AP)—Essence Atkins used to get welts on her legs while jumping rope as a child in Brooklyn, but she never really minded.

Atkins, who stars as Dee Dee on the UPN network's "Half & Half," says she and her friends would ask telephone

repair workers for cord and use it for rope to turn double Dutch.

"That made the best rope. And a lot of times they would give us some pieces of cord and that's what we would use to jump with," Atkins told AP Radio in an interview.

One misstep and a huge

welt would appear on her leg, she said, but Atkins never really minded.

"I'm a great turner, I can keep the rhythm very well," she said. "I was a dancer; I have a lot of rhythm."

Atkins also starred in the film "Deliver us From Eva."

Dimond leads coverage of Jackson story

NEW YORK (AP)—A few months ago, reporter Diane Dimond told Court TV Chairman Henry Schleiff that she was working on a great story and would need him to commit money and manpower to help dig it out. But even in the privacy of his office, she wouldn't tell Schleiff what the story was.

Intrigued, he gave Dimond the go-ahead. Schleiff was rewarded in late November when she broke the story of authorities searching Michael Jackson's Neverland ranch for evidence, the precursor to molestation charges filed against the pop star.

Dimond's work has put the network out front on what is certain to be one of the biggest legal stories of 2004—no small matter when you're a news network devoted to crime and punishment.

Her tough reporting has also left Dimond vulnerable to charges that she's too identified with the prosecution, and that Court TV's coup could crumble if the case against Jackson does.

Jackson's arraignment on charges of molesting a boy under age 14 is scheduled for Jan. 16.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

BUBBLY BUBBLES

Solution: 8 letters

E T T K E D O L P X E T U B S

P N A N N B P R E M M I H S C

O E G U E O W G L E O C S I D

L G O A C R R A E I L E R H N

E R D K P E A X T A Q C S A M

V E E R M M P P Y E U U R C U

E T N E I E A E S L R B I I U

D E V X L F R H A N I E I D C

B D E A P K T R C S A G S S A

T R L U N N F I I N L R H S V

S S O K L I M R N O F L T T L

R S P T Z R S A O G B A A S S

U A E Z H D T H E L I U B B Y

B L O W N O I T A N O B R A C

E G R U S A D O S P A C E N D

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Yesterday's Answer: Reciprocity

To order the new WONDERWORD TREASURY 2: "Memorable Occasions," send check or money order for \$19.95 plus \$3.00 postage and handling (\$14.95) to Universal Press Syndicate, Attn: Wonderword, 4570 Main St., Kansas City, Mo. 64111 or call toll-free 1-800-285-6754, ext. 4615.

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NO
CARTOON
CHARACTERS
BEYOND
THIS
POINT!

THOMAS J. SULLIVAN, 2/10/04

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Brigham Young's place

5 Remnant change

12 Comic-strip possum

13 Appraisal-tox VIP

14 Precinct

15 Octagonal warning

17 Child's play

18 Dis-pensed candy

19 "Do unto"

21 Source of rubber

24 Fishing-line attachment

25 Addict

26 Oscillo-scope line

30 Whopper

31 Sharp as

32 Theater duels, slangily

33 "Auld —"

35 Worked at a loom

36 Poove

37 Half a 1960s quartet

38 Garb named for an atoll

41 Ump

42 Wicked

43 Sitcom about nothing

48 Above average?

49 Teeter-totter quorum

50 Slender

51 Picnic invaders

52 Rarin' to go

53 Exile isle

2 Youngster

3 Past

4 "Night hawks" painter

5 Of Shak.'s day

6 Pos. opp.

7 Condemn publicly

8 Nut whose shell is poisonous

9 Sea eagle

10 Approximate

11 Reveille's opposite

16 West-hoimer subject

20 "Star"

21 Calm before the storm

22 Largest of the seven

23 Adoles-cent

24 Hansen of NPR

26 Hair-dressers

27 Small bil

28 Bounty rival

29 Former mates

31 "It" "boy"

34 Barbo-cues

35 Liquivo-cate

37 Chaps

38 Bygone VIIS

39 Reitman or Lendl

40 Gael's garb

41 Laugh a minute

44 Ram's ma'am

45 Conger, e.g.

46 "Rocky Horror" room

47 "CSI" evidence

DOWN

1 Boom times

21 Calm before the storm

39 Reitman or Lendl

40 Gael's garb

41 Laugh a minute

44 Ram's ma'am

45 Conger, e.g.

46 "Rocky Horror" room

47 "CSI" evidence

Solution time: 21 mins.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

12 13 14

15 16 17

18 19 20

21 22 23 24

25 26 27 28 29

30 31 32

33 34 35

36 37

38 39 40

41 42 43 44 45 46 47

48 49 50 51 52 53

Yesterday's answer 1-6

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5951 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY

Joey Lauren Adams, Rowan Atkinson, Syd Barrett, Bonnie Franklin

HAPPY BIRTHDAY:

Focus on what will beef up your bank account. This is not a year to sit back and make others rich by working hard for them, or be talked into taking on things that you know aren't going to benefit you personally. Pay special attention to your own emotional and physical wellness this year. Your numbers are 2, 11, 20, 29, 38, 47

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Temptation will get the better of you where purchases are concerned. Spare yourself the anguish and refrain from shopping today. Do what you can to help an older relative. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

Begin to position yourself for a better job. Pleasure trips will enhance love and romance and may bring you into contact with someone who has a great moneymaking idea. Talk to a financial advisor. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Too much chatter and not enough action will lead to little accomplishment and a poor reputation. Step back and center yourself before you aimlessly rush into things. **

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Don't take things the wrong way because you think everything is about you today. Put in the effort required to get ahead. Be smart. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

Don't be blind to the financial opportunities that exist. Home improvement projects should be on your to-do list. Make your suggestions with diplomacy. ****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Do something nice for someone else. Your contributions will make others stand up and take notice. Partnerships can be developed. Don't be afraid of change. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Finish the projects you already have going and work quietly by yourself today. If someone tries to talk you into doing something you don't want to do, back away. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Tie up unfinished paperwork. Follow through with ideas and plans and ask questions. Your attitude is changing. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

A relationship you are in will be close to the edge. If problems are brewing, deal with them swiftly. Accepting the changes that occur will be half the battle. ***

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

The more help you offer friends and family, the more you will get in return. Love interests may mount if you attend an industry event. Your talents will bring added popularity and respect. ***

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

There is no time-out today. Push to get where you want to go. Your comments to others will make a difference to the outcome of something you are trying to get approved. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Your imagination will be working overtime today. Put pen to paper and jot down your ideas. Make arrangements to get out and have some fun. Physical activities will relieve stress. *****

BIRTHDAY BABY:

You are a risk-taker and thrive on the thrill. You are a creative thinker and can usually talk your way out of any dilemma you face.

(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Watterson

CALVIN, COME DOWN FOR DINNER! I'M NOT CALLING YOU AGAIN!

HURRY UP WITH THE TURBAN!

THERE.

SORRY I'M LATE. I WAS UNAVOIDABLY DETAINED.

CALVIN, WE DON'T EAT AT THE TABLE LOOKING LIKE THAT. TAKE OFF THE SHEET.

UH... HEH HEH... UM...

THANK YOU.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I WORRY. THEY NEVER NOTICE ANYTHING.

Garfield®

by Jim Davis

DO NOT HIT ME IN THE FACE WITH THAT PIE!

YOU'RE THE BOSS

PIE DOWN THE PANTS!

SPLAT!

Adam@home

By Brian Basset

ADAM, TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF THE RESOLUTIONS I PUT DOWN FOR THIS YEAR.

WHOA!..

VERY IMPRESSIVE, LAURA.

...YOU HAVE BEAUTIFUL HANDWRITING.

I WASN'T REFERRING TO MY HANDWRITING.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR TOMBSTONE TO SAY?

KEEP OFF THE GRASS.

Perry leads Memorial going into final

By DOUG FERGUSON
AP GOLF WRITER

DUBLIN, Ohio (AP) — Another brutal Saturday at Muirfield - in Ohio, not Scotland - was too much for Tiger Woods.

But not for Kenny Perry. Despite cold, whipping winds and the toughest weekend conditions at Muirfield Village in almost 20 years, Perry made only one bogey in a round of 2-under 70 and led Lee Janzen by two shots going into the final round. “That’s probably better than the 61 I shot last week,” Perry said. “The conditions were brutal. It was raw out there.”

Perry, coming off a victory at Colonial with a record score, again ended a solid round with a birdie on the 18th. His approach ran up the ridge, then trickled down the slope to 8 feet.

He was at 13-under 203. Woods, meanwhile, struggled with his swing and the gusts up to 30 mph made it look even worse. He hit a tee shot out of bounds for triple bogey and played the front nine in 42. He had to play the final four holes in 2 under to shoot 76.

It was his worst round ever at Memorial, where he is the only three-time winner, and at times it was reminiscent of his 81 in the third round of the British Open last year at Muirfield - with one exception.

“It’s a hell of a lot warmer here,” Woods said.

He wound up 11 strokes out of the lead - just like at Muirfield last summer - and no chance to catch the golf’s hottest players.

That’s not the case for a few others. Janzen, winless since his second U.S. Open title five years ago, holed two bunkers shots on the back nine - for birdie on No. 15 and for par on the No. 17 - and had a 71 that left him at



Kenny Perry, of Franklin, Ky., watches his tee shot on the par-5 fifth hole during the third round of the Memorial Tournament Saturday May 31, 2003 in Dublin, Ohio. Perry parred the hole.

11-under 202. “I just wanted to hang in there,” Janzen said. “Regardless of what I shot, I just wanted to enjoy the day - kind of silly to enjoy a day like today - but enjoy that I play golf and I was near the lead.”

No one had a more enjoyable day than Jose Maria Olazabal. His bogey-free 66 was more than nine strokes better than the average score Saturday. That shot him up from a tie for 30th into a tie for third, along with Vijay Singh and Retief Goosen at 8-under 208.

Singh had a 72, while Goosen had three bogeys on the back nine for a 74. Olazabal was the only player to break 70, and only 11 players broke par. About two hours before the leaders teed off, the third round was halted for 46 minutes as a storm system passed. Left behind was the nastiest weather of

the year on the PGA Tour, with temperatures in the low 50s and gusts that spell trouble along the tree-lined fairways of Muirfield Village.

“It’s hard to judge where the wind is coming from,” Woods said. “The thing that’s hard is to get committed over a shot.”

That was evident on the first fairway. Woods held his pose and followed the flight of the ball until it landed 25 yards short of the green. He looked at the treetops in frustration, trying to figure out the swirling wind, then tossed his club at the bag.

It would get a lot worse, especially on No. 6 when Woods pulled his tee shot through the trees, into a backyard and out of bounds by about 2 feet. He walked all the way up to his ball before being told it was not in play, then had to return to the tee.

He wound up with a triple bogey

and made the turn in 42.

Woods couldn’t turn anywhere for sympathy. Eleven players shot 80 or worse, the highest number on the weekend ever at the Memorial.

John Daly drove the 343-yard 14th hole for the third straight day, and this time got a birdie. He also had two triple bogeys and a quadruple bogey for an 83.

“It’s a survival course more than anything out there,” Ernie Els said after his 70. “It’s pretty punishing. It’s the hardest day we’ve had on the tour to date.”

That’s what made Olazabal’s round so brilliant.

The field average was 75.5, the highest for a weekend round since 1981 at Muirfield Village, and Olazabal made it look like he was at the Bob Hope Classic.

“It’s as good a round as I’ve seen in a long time,” said Jeff Sluman, his playing partner. “I’m not unhappy with my 72, but after looking at Ollie’s round, it felt like a million.”

Ohio tends to bring out the best in Olazabal. He shot a 61 up the road at Firestone in 1990 when he won the World Series of Golf, and took just as much pleasure out of this 66.

“Here, it’s a different story,” Olazabal said. “To shoot 66, I think it’s really close to that 61.”

It got him a lot closer to the lead,

San Diego Padres nip Diamondbacks, 8-7

(P) — Pinch-hitter Lou Merloni drove in the go-ahead run in San Diego’s two-run eighth inning with a sacrifice fly, lifting the Padres to an 8-7 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Saturday night.

Merloni’s sacrifice fly off Oscar Villarreal, Arizona’s third pitcher in the inning, gave San Diego just its sixth win in 33 games. The Padres went 5-24 in May, their worst month in team history.

Mark Loretta’s pinch-hit single of Mike Myers scored Gary Matthews Jr., who singled off Scott Service (0-1), tied it at 7-all.

Luis Gonzalez drove in four runs for Arizona and Alex Cintron went 3-for-4, including a two-run double in the top of the eighth inning. Cintron had two doubles and a triple.

Trailing 6-4 in the eighth inning, Arizona rebounded with back-to-back doubles by Matt Williams and Cintron off Jesse Orosco (1-1).

Matt Herges pitched the ninth for his second saves in three opportunities.

The Diamondbacks’ rally started off Luther Hackman, who hit Junior Spivey leading off the eighth. Mark Grace’s



San Diego Padres’ Rondell White is tagged out by Arizona Diamondbacks catcher Rod Barajas after he tried to score from third on a flyball to left in seventh inning of their game Saturday night, May 31, 2003, in San Diego. Umpire Phil Cuzzi makes the call.

one-out single knocked out Hackman.

Williams, pinch-hitting for Tony Womack, doubled into the left-field corner off Orosco, scoring Spivey and cutting the lead to 6-5. Cintron then ripped a double into the left-center field gap to put Arizona ahead.

Gonzalez hit a two-run homer in the first inning and threw out a runner

at home plate.

Ryan Klesko homered and drove in two runs for the Padres, who scored five runs in the first after Arizona went up 2-0.

Klesko contributed an RBI single in the first, and hit his 10th home run of the season, a solo shot with two outs, to put San Diego ahead 6-2 in

the third inning.

Bennett’s two-run single capped the five-run first inning off Arizona starter Elmer Dessens when the Padres amassed a season-high seven hits. Xavier Nady and Matthews Jr. also drove in a run apiece.

Dessens settled down after the rough first inning. The right-hander allowed one run on four hits over the next four innings. Dessens finished by allowing six runs and 11 hits in five innings.

Gonzalez hit a two-run homer, his 11th, in the first inning off Adam Eaton, and cut the San Diego lead to 6-3 in the third with a run-scoring double that scored Cintron, who doubled.

After Eaton walked the first two batters in the fifth, Gonzalez added an RBI single. The Diamondbacks loaded the bases with a two-out walk to Lyle Overbay, but Eaton escaped further damage when he induced Spivey to ground out.

Gonzalez prevented the Padres from adding to their lead when he caught Nady’s fly ball in left-field foul territory and threw out Rondell White on a three-hop throw to catcher Rod Barajas.

but still needing five shots to catch the guy on top.

Perry has been practically flawless the last two weeks, no matter the tournament, the course or the condition he faces.

“My goal today was to make 18 pars,” Perry said. “I parred the first nine and said, ‘Man, I might do this.’”

A birdie on the par-3 12th over water ruined that, and another birdie on the 14th almost turned the Memorial into a runaway. But Janzen stayed on his heels, and Perry made his first bogey in 50 holes.

“It seems like things are going my way,” Perry said. “I make the putts when I need to I get the good breaks, but I’m executing my shots.”

MLB STANDINGS				
NATIONAL LEAGUE				
East Division				
Team	W	L	Pct	G
N.Y. Yankees	32	23	.582	-
Boston	31	23	.574	1½
Toronto	31	26	.544	2
Baltimore	27	27	.500	41½
Tampa Bay	21	33	.389	101½
Central Division				
Minnesota	31	23	.574	-
Kansas City	27	26	.509	31½
Chi. White Sox	25	29	.463	6
Cleveland	21	32	.396	91½
Detroit	14	39	.264	161½
West Division				
Seattle	36	18	.667	-
Oakland	31	23	.574	5
Anaheim	26	27	.491	91½
Texas	25	29	.463	11
Yesterday's Games				
Detroit 4, N.Y. Yankees 2				
Chicago White Sox at Cleveland, ppd, rain				
Oakland 7, Kansas City 6				
Toronto 10, Boston 7				
Seattle 5, Minnesota 2				
Anaheim 6, Tampa Bay 1				
Baltimore 7, Texas 1				
AMERICAN LEAGUE				
East Division				
Atlanta	37	18	.673	-
Montreal	33	22	.600	4
Philadelphia	29	25	.537	71½
Florida	26	31	.456	12
N.Y. Mets	25	30	.455	12
Central Division				
Chi. Cubs	30	24	.556	-
Houston	29	27	.518	2
St. Louis	27	27	.500	3
Cincinnati	26	29	.473	41½
Pittsburgh	24	30	.444	6
Milwaukee	21	34	.382	91½
West Division				
San Francisco	34	20	.630	-
Los Angeles	31	24	.564	31½
Colorado	27	29	.482	8
Arizona	25	30	.455	91½
San Diego	16	40	.286	19
Yesterday's Games				
N.Y. Mets 4, Atlanta 2				
Chicago Cubs 1, Houston 0, 16 innings				
Pittsburgh 4, St. Louis 3				
Florida 3, Cincinnati 2				
Montreal at Philadelphia, ppd, rain				
San Diego 8, Arizona 7				
Los Angeles 3, Milwaukee 0				
San Francisco 2, Colorado 1				

Mighty Ducks top Devils 3-2 in OT

By ALAN ROBINSON
AP SPORTS WRITER

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP)— Martin Brodeur showed he's not perfect, but the Anaheim Mighty Ducks still are in playoff overtime—and that's why they're still alive in the Stanley Cup finals.

Ruslan Salei scored off Adam Oates' faceoff win at 6:59 into overtime and the Mighty Ducks, taking advantage of one of the biggest misplays of Brodeur's career, beat the New Jersey Devils 3-2 in Game 3 Saturday night.

Oates fed the puck off the faceoff to Salei at the top of the slot, and Brodeur barely reacted to his one-timer as the Mighty Ducks improved to 6-0 in playoff overtimes. The Devils are 2-2.

It was essentially a must-win game for the Ducks, who played with the desperation expected of a team that trailed 2-0 in the series and almost certainly would have had no chance to raise the cup had it lost.

Ducks coach Mike Babcock joked that Salei is one of his hardest shooters, if not the most accurate.

"He can really shoot the puck. We always tell him shoot the puck on net once in a while," Babcock said. "He bangs the puck off the glass with the best of them."

Salei said the faceoff win was so clean, "You've got to shoot. So far, it's the biggest goal I've ever scored. We had to win this game. We had to get some momentum going. Now maybe it will go seven games, or six."

Salei's goal was his second of the



New Jersey Devils' Scott Gomez, left, is congratulated by teammate Patrik Elias following his third period goal against the Anaheim Mighty Ducks in Game 3 of the Stanley Cup Finals in Anaheim, Calif., Saturday, May 31, 2003. Elias had an assist on the play.

playoffs.

Game 4 will be Monday night, when the Devils can either take a commanding 3-1 lead or the Mighty Ducks will tie a series they seemed out of following two dominating Devils wins in New Jersey.

Overtime playoff wins have largely been responsible for Anaheim's remarkable playoff run, which began with three consecutive series-opening overtime victories.

Goalie Jean-Sebastien Giguere has been unbeatable in overtime, with an NHL-record overtime scoreless streak of 166 minutes, 4 seconds. He broke Patrick Roy's record of 162:56 early in the overtime.

Giguere turned aside 29 of 31 shots in by far his best game of the finals.

The Devils trailed 2-1 in the second after Brodeur lost his stick and couldn't defend Sandis Ozolinsh's seemingly harmless shot as it trickled in from the blue line.

"It happens to the best of the goal-tenders," Devils coach Pat Burns said. "You don't think Patrick Roy ever made a play like that? It's not the end of the world. You're going to fault the goaltender for that? I'm not."

Babcock said the misplay gave the Ducks a huge lift.

"I thought that was the break we needed," he said.

But the Devils tied it at 2 when Scott Gomez deflected Grant Marshall's wrist from above the right circle past Giguere at 9:11 of the third. Gomez has two goals in the finals after scoring only once in 16 games.

That might have won it had Brodeur

not made a grievous mistake on a play that couldn't have been more routine.

Only 45 seconds after the Devils' Patrik Elias tied it at 1, Giguere fed the puck up ice to Ozolinsh who, draped by two Devils, pushed it toward the net.

Brodeur, positioned at the left of the crease, began to scramble over to play the puck, only to drop his stick. With Brodeur unable to defend, the puck trickled into the side of the net as the goalie dropped to his knees, raising his hand to his head in disbelief.

It was a perfectly awful play by the goalie who was near perfect for the first seven periods of the series.

"Obviously, they got breaks and that's what it's all about. They got them and we didn't get them," Burns said. "We had a great chance tonight (to go up 3-0). But it came down to errors and mistakes, like every hockey game does."

The maddening misplay at 14:47 of the second came slightly more than 11 minutes after Ozolinsh set up Anaheim's first goal of the series, by the infrequently used Marc Chouinard. That goal at 3:39 of the second ended Brodeur's scoreless streak of 143 minutes, 39 seconds, the second-longest to start the finals.

Ozolinsh shot the puck toward the net from along the boards, and it deflected off Chouinard's stick and past Brodeur to the glove side. The Devils scored the first goal in each of the first two games on their home ice, and the Ducks never challenged after that in either game.

Larry Brown to coach Pistons, AP learns

By LARRY LAGE
AP SPORTS WRITER



AUBURN HILLS, Mich. (AP)—Rick Carlisle sat elbow-to-elbow with the man who had just fired him, Joe Dumars. In a bizarre scene, talk turned to Larry Brown, who will become Detroit's next coach.

"If you think he's going to bring in a stiff behind me, you're nuts," Carlisle said Saturday. "He's going to bring in a big-time guy, and if he can do that he will have done his job."

Carlisle was fired with one year and \$2 million left on his contract despite winning two straight division titles, 100 regular-season games, a Coach of the Year award and leading the Pistons to the Eastern Conference finals for the first time since 1991.

He will be replaced by Brown, who has already reached agreement with the Pistons on a long-term deal, according to a source within the league with knowledge of the discussions between the Pistons and Brown. The source spoke to The Associated Press on condition of

anonymity, saying the hiring will become official on Monday.

Saturday's news conference was strange - Carlisle poking fun at himself during an opening statement, then initiating jokes and defending the decision when Dumars was pressed to explain the dismissal.

"The guy at the gate almost wouldn't let me in to my own firing," Carlisle said.

When Dumars said, "This is not a fun day at all," Carlisle quipped: "It's all right. You can have fun with it."

Brown resigned as coach of the Philadelphia 76ers on Monday after six seasons. The Sixers released him from a contractual clause that prohibited him from coaching another NBA team if he left Philadelphia prematurely.

Counting Detroit, there are eight NBA coaching vacancies.

When asked about Brown, Dumars said, "We'll be talking to him," adding that he has heard Brown's name linked to openings in Houston, Cleveland and Washington.

"This is not about Larry Brown, this is about Rick Carlisle," Dumars said.

Brown did not return two messages left by The AP at his home.

Philadelphia captain Eric Snow understands why the

Pistons are going after his former coach.

"With Rick Carlisle gone, it would be great for Detroit's organization if it was fortunate enough to get Larry Brown," Snow said. "He's a Hall of Famer who is a great coach and a great teacher that would make every one of their players better, and that would make the Pistons even better."

Carlisle, in his first head coaching job, helped turn Detroit from a lottery team into the top-seeded squad in the East this season. He was honored as NBA Coach of the Year for the 2001-02 season.

He led the Pistons to a 100-64 regular-season record and a 12-15 postseason mark over two years.

The Pistons' season ended May 24 when they were swept by New Jersey in the conference finals. Carlisle's coaching was publicly criticized during the first round when Detroit fell behind 3-1 against Orlando. But he turned to little-used Tayshaun Price and Mehmet Okur to generate some offense and help the Pistons advance.

"You can get into a conversation about what may or not be fair, or you can be excited about being at the peak of your career," Carlisle said. "I'll look back and remember the good

things and the things that were accomplished by a group that no one thought had a chance."

Carlisle was hired as Detroit's coach on May 25, 2001, after the team fired George Irvine following a 32-50 season. There was believed to be tension between Dumars and Carlisle, but both denied that was true Saturday.

Carlisle said he was unsure if he would pursue a coaching job right away or take a year off to be a television analyst.

"There was never any talk of an extension, there was none from me to Joe, or from them to me. I didn't feel that one was owed to me," Carlisle said. "I was ready to honor the last year of my contract and be judged after three years. That would've been fine."

Brown, 62, had two years left in his contract that paid him \$6 million per season in Philadelphia.

He also coached Denver (five years), Indiana (four years), San Antonio (3 1/2 years), New Jersey (two years), Carolina of the ABA (two years) and the Clippers (18 months).

Brown's tenure with the Sixers was his longest in his 31-year coaching career. He led the Sixers to the playoffs for five straight seasons, including the 2001 NBA Finals, and will coach the U.S. men's national team this summer



Philadelphia 76ers head coach Larry Brown directs his team in the first quarter in this April 15, 2003 photo, in Chicago against the Chicago Bulls. The Detroit Pistons fired coach Rick Carlisle and will hire Larry Brown, a source within the league said Saturday, May 31, 2003.

at an Olympic qualifying tournament in Puerto Rico.

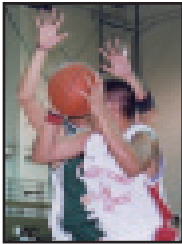
He has a 879-685 record in the NBA, and 1,285-853 overall, including ABA and college. Brown won an NCAA championship with Kansas in 1988, and became the first coach to take six NBA teams to the playoffs when the 76ers made it in 1999.

Brown would inherit a Pis-

tons team that has the No. 2 pick in the June 26 draft. Detroit will likely select a scorer - Darko Milicic of Serbia or Syracuse's Carmelo Anthony - to complement a young nucleus of Richard Hamilton, Chauncey Billups, Ben Wallace and rookies Okur and Prince.

Brown's brother, Herb, was head coach of the Pistons from 1975-76 through 1977-78.





Mobil blasts past PDI

Host Mobil Oil was armed and dangerous last Thursday as they gunned down Pacific Development Inc, 103-68, in the second day of competition in the Mobil Oil Invitational Basketball Tournament.

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Arenas leads Warriors past Jazz, 108-95

Gilbert Arenas scored 27 points and the Golden State Warriors beat the Utah Jazz 108-95 Saturday night to win for the fifth time in six games.

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